

# The Aesthetics of Race in Turn-of-the-Century Germany

Marie Madeleine in Her Literary and Cultural  
Context

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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**The Aesthetics of Race in Turn-of-the-Century Germany. Marie Madeleine in Her Literary and Cultural Context.**

Marie Madeleine was the *nom de plume* of Gertrud von Puttkamer, born Gertrud Günther in East Prussia in 1881. Starting with a collection of poems, *Auf Kypros* (1900), which caused a sensation on account of their erotic content, Marie Madeleine published popular, often best-selling novels, short stories, plays and poetry. Her early work, from 1900 until the end of World War I, offers an unprecedented window into the culture of turn-of-the-century Germany and is a particularly revealing testimony of the pre-fascist German fascination with racial typology. This dissertation offers biographical information and a general introduction to the work of this now forgotten author. It then goes on to employ her prolific prose works as an axis for a comprehensive study of racial conceptions in the entire spectrum of turn-of-the-century German literature, from journalism and popular literature to works belonging to the canon. Particular reference is given to the writing of the young Thomas Mann and of Eduard von Keyserling. The background of racial theory – the parallels that can be found between the literary portrayal of race and the writings of such theorists as Gobineau, Nietzsche, Julius Langbehn and Houston Stewart Chamberlain or the lesser known Heinrich Driesmans, Carl Heinrich Stratz and Ludwig Woltmann – are explored in depth. The emphasis is on the literary and theoretical representation of the Slavic, Latin and Teutonic peoples, with whom Marie Madeleine's work was principally occupied. The dissertation thus endeavours to establish the Slavic and Latin peoples as major figures of alterity alongside Jews in turn-of-the-century German literature. Ultimately, the dissertation shows that despite the chauvinism of certain theorists, the turn-of-the-century German obsession with race was characterised primarily by a whimsical and relatively benign aestheticism. It is an obsession that is best explored as the product of the turn-of-the-century German inclination to aestheticise all aspects of life, which ultimately succeeded in breaking the boundaries between art and science. It was part of the same cultural tide that brought on the *Lebensreform* and even *Jugendstil*.



I hereby declare that I have composed the following thesis, that the work is my own and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Bayreuth, 27 October 2004

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## **INTRODUCTION: REVITALISING OUR PERSPECTIVE THROUGH THE WORK OF A FORGOTTEN AUTHOR**

The purpose of the following dissertation is twofold. Firstly, it serves as an introduction to the work of Marie Madeleine (1881-1944), a prolific author of variable talent but considerable cultural-historical interest – up until now, her work has been disregarded by the academic world, despite the fact that many of her publications were best-sellers. Secondly, it is a study of a little-explored topic: the aesthetic function of race in literature. There have been numerous studies of race and ethnicity in literature in recent years, yet none has explored the issue from this perspective. Indeed, researching the idea of race for purposes other than denouncing it remains something of a taboo, and perhaps it is only through reading the work of an author such as Madeleine, where the essentially benign fascination with race is so apparent, that a contemporary reader could feel comfortable adopting such a perspective.

Marie Madeleine was an author whom we might best ascribe to the phenomenon of turn-of-the-century decadent literature. Her pen-name, inspired by the purportedly sinful, biblical figure, is a nod to the decadent tradition, and it is likely that Madeleine chose to employ the French form of Mary Magdalene in honour of the erotically charged French art and literature of the day. Throughout her life, Madeleine was intensely preoccupied with the unconscious processes behind taste, attraction and sexuality, and soon after publishing her first adolescent poems, she increasingly portrayed race as one of the primary factors within these processes. As this study will endeavour to show, Madeleine was far from alone in this regard; other German authors we tend to associate with literary decadence harboured a similar fascination with racial phenomena, and I hope to demonstrate how this is particularly the case in the work of two better known authors of the day: Thomas Mann (1875-1955), arguably the most esteemed German author of the turn of the century, and Eduard von Keyserling (1855-1918), who is steadily gaining recognition among contemporary scholars and readers.

That the aestheticisation of racial phenomena, particularly of racial peculiarities, takes on a key role in the work of authors associated with decadence is not surprising, considering the decadent tendency to aestheticise most anything, human beings in particular. As Hermann Bahr writes of the decadents: ‘am inneren Menschen selbst verschmähen sie allen Rest, der nicht Stimmung ist. Das Denken, das Fühlen, und das Wollen achten sie gering und nur den Vorrat, welchen sie

jeweilig auf ihren Nerven finden, wollen sie ausdrücken und mitteilen.’<sup>1</sup> Bahr furthermore indicates that decadent artists had an equally marked interest in anything different: ‘Alles Gewöhnliche, Häufige, Alltägliche ist ihnen verhaßt’ (ibid.). Therefore, it is perhaps only logical that writers associated with this trend would develop a penchant for portraying characters as decorative racial oddities. Yet the aestheticisation of racial phenomena is by no means peculiar to decadence, nor to turn-of-the-century Germany. Rather, it seems to be present in the art of humans of all cultures and epochs. Even if the concept of race is relatively new, the fascination with human variety seems to be something of an in-born, human trait. We can find examples of it in the writings of Herodotus or Tacitus, in Medieval epics, or in the Classical and Romantic Ages of German Literature (if we consider, for instance, the fascination that Southern Europeans held for writers like Goethe or Tieck). It was in the mid-nineteenth century, however, that increasing nationalism rendered Europeans particularly attuned to differences, and that the first racial theorists came up with a systematic means of categorising these differences. Then, at the turn of the century, a virtual infatuation with the idea of race began to infect all aspects of German culture.

For many contemporary scholars, the reasons for this upsurge might seem obvious. Using the lens of post-colonialism, we could speak of Germany’s imperialistic ambitions, and of its new colonies in Africa, Asia and the South Pacific. Yet, more often than not, it is the racial differences within Europe and even Germany itself that are subject to aesthetic reveries. We could then speak of Germany’s European ‘colonialism’, of a German need to justify hegemony over Poland and Alsace. But why would there be such a sudden increase in Germans’ fascination with race in the 1890s and 1900s, and why would it so often take on the most apolitical, the most aesthetic and erotic dimensions imaginable?

In light of our struggle to come to terms with centuries of imperialism and genocide, it is understandable that, as of late, there has been an emphasis on exploring the (generally chauvinist) political connotations of artists’ portrayals of race. Yet a new lens is clearly needed to answer certain questions. By subjecting the topic of race in art to a foundational theory, scholars can quickly come up with some straightforward explanations, but the risk is that we lose touch with the intuitive processes behind the creation of art, which are anything but straightforward. By regarding art as nothing more than the product of the oppressive politics of its country of origin, we tend to forget that most artists, even those who are intent on satisfying their public or regime, are iconoclastic individuals, who are likely to have

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann Bahr, ‘Die Décadence’, pp. 225-32 in *Die Wiener Moderne*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981, p.

personal visions when it comes to race. We tend to forget that a great deal of art is based not on what fits into the agenda of the world outside, but on what the artist simply feels is aesthetic or interesting.

All this does not mean that we should ignore an artist's historical context. On the contrary, it means we need to be more aware of it than ever. We need to permeate the surface of political events and explore the artist's cultural milieu if we want to even begin to understand what sort of conscious and unconscious influences are at play in an artist's portrayal of race. We need to take the artist as a person into consideration, to be aware of all the intricacies of the artist's cultural milieu that he/she might have absorbed by chance or by preference, not just the politics of the artist's nation, not just the general trends of imperialism or racism that characterise the artist's century. To understand what turn-of-the-century German writers are doing, for instance, with the image of the Slav, it is simply not enough to mention a few things about colonial relations, about a German sense of superiority, about a *Kulturkampf* which took on ethnic connotations. It is not enough to theorise about the inherent oppression behind the idea of 'difference'. This has become an easy way of doing things – we now need do little research of our own, and we no longer need to try putting ourselves into the artist's shoes. Nowadays, it often seems to be enough to cite the latest book on post-colonial theory, pull out as many quotations from your author of choice that seem to support it, and then you have a dissertation on 'the other'.

It is for this reason, perhaps, that the so-called 'other' has proved itself to be such a popular and yet such an unfruitful topic. As the acclaimed British literary theorist Terry Eagleton writes:

otherness is not the most fertile of intellectual furrows. Indeed, once you have observed that the other is typically portrayed as lazy, dirty, stupid, crafty, womanly, passive, rebellious, sexually rapacious, childlike, enigmatic and a number of other mutually contradictory epithets, it is hard to know what to do next apart from reaching for yet another textual illustration of the fact. The theme is as theoretically thin as it is politically pressing.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps we need to take this as a cue to re-examine the whole notion of otherness. In a truly colonial setting – say, nineteenth-century India – the methodology parodied by Eagleton may in fact have some validity. But in my own reading of German authors of the turn of the century, I have discovered – rather than a grim preoccupation with drawing boundaries between the self and the other – a shameless luxuriating in racial categories, in racial variety, including the variety within oneself and one's



countrymen. Though it is likely that race, like anything else depicted in art, always plays an aesthetic as well as a political role, it would seem that, in turn-of-the-century German literature, it plays a primarily, even overwhelmingly aesthetic role. It brings to mind the relish of a collector, of a connoisseur, more than anything else. Thus, this dissertation is not so much about the 'the other', not so much about 'difference' as about 'differences' in the plural – about the human preoccupation with human variety. We will discover that the portrayal of racial difference was not primarily a political tool resulting from chauvinism but a fashionable trend resulting from naïve, romantic curiosity. For the majority of German writers at this time, racial theory becomes a means not so much to dismiss non-Germans as to paint them in a piquant, if at times dubious light. The phenomenon has more in common with National Geographic than with Nazism, and it is perhaps no coincidence that both foreign travel and photographic journalism were increasingly popular (and increasingly feasible) at the end of the nineteenth century.

It is possible, in fact, that the fascination with racial variety, with racial phenomena on the whole, had much to do with a deep-seated human psychosexual urge, which, on account of favourable conditions, was able to blossom in Germany to an unprecedented degree. This, however, belongs to the realm of psychologists and anthropologists, not literary historians, and a similar exploration of the portrayal of race in other cultures and epochs would be necessary before we could come close to understanding the phenomenon from such a perspective. The job that needs to be done right now is not theorising but fieldwork, and it is for this reason that this study will address first and foremost the question of how, not why. How do German authors of this day portray racial phenomena? How do they portray specific races and how do they portray racial mixture and racial purity? What roles do these portrayals play in their writing – in plot, atmosphere and character development? Using the work of Marie Madeleine as an axis, and making forays into the work of many of her contemporaries, we will discover just how many answers there are to these questions. In focussing primarily on the work of an author who was not concerned with taking any issue all too seriously, or with attaching a myriad symbolic connotations to every image she produced – by focussing on an author who was concerned above all with pleasing a certain common denominator, and in as efficient a way as possible – we get a particularly clear window into the popular consciousness of the day.

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<sup>2</sup> Terry Eagleton, 'A Spot of Firm Government', *London Review of Books*, vol. 23, no. 16, 23 August 2001 (a review of *God, Gulliver and Genocide: Barbarism and the European Imagination 1492-1945* by Claude Rawson).

In endeavouring to remedy the overly politicised discourse on the portrayal of difference, it is useful to keep in mind that authors tend not to find inspiration from politicians but from other artists and, particularly in turn-of-the-century Germany, from philosophers and scholars – in short, from other ‘creative types’. When exploring the cultural milieu of turn-of-the-century German authors, these are the figures we need to be aware of. That is why I have provided, at the beginning of every chapter, an extensive overview not so much of the great ‘events’ of the day but of how writers, racial theorists and other thinkers up until Marie Madeleine’s day portrayed race. Then, throughout each chapter, I draw parallels to contemporaneous artists and theorists who were working with similar imagery. For this reason, the following study can be regarded as an introduction not only to Marie Madeleine and the literary aestheticisation of race, but also to turn-of-the-century German racial discourse as a whole, something which has yet to be done in any sort of broad scope. We tend to consider only the unilateral theories of Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927) in this context, but Chamberlain was only one of many eccentric figureheads theorising about race at this time. He has become so important in hindsight because it was his particular perspective upon which much of Nazi racial ideology was later based. Chamberlain’s *Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (1899) was not a great influence on the racial preoccupations of this time, nor is it a testimony as to the character of these preoccupations. It was simply one of its more dangerous side-effects. German racial theorists were far from unified on any topic, even when it came to such basic questions as to whether racial mixture is beneficial or detrimental. Artists, as can be expected, were even less unified. Yet there is no denying that certain ideas and images, often some of the more bizarre ones, were handed down at random from one theorist to another and from one author to another, and as we will find, this seems to have had more to do with fashion than anything else.

Contemporary readers may be surprised about the extent to which turn-of-the-century writers were preoccupied with race. Today, popular writers would not get very far by offering their readership a barrage of sumptuous racial imagery. This is not primarily because it would be seen as politically incorrect – after all, in regards to gender, there still is a great deal of popular art that is unabashedly politically incorrect. Rather, racial phenomena seem not to fascinate the public in quite the same way as they used to. Though racism is as rampant as ever, there seems to be much less interest in romanticising racial differences – an indication that the two phenomena are not necessarily related. Yet, if the aesthetic function of race had totally dissipated in the modern world, this dissertation would have hardly been

possible, and its purpose, beyond a quaint historical survey, would be questionable. As I have already indicated, it seems that the aestheticisation of race is deeply rooted in human culture as a whole, and though it was through reading Marie Madeleine that I gained the confidence to go ahead with this study, the original impetus was from my own personal experiences.

It was during my stay as an exchange student in Tübingen, well before I began my doctoral studies, that I first began to think about these issues seriously. Here I took a course on German travel literature, in which our teacher, understandably terrified of seeming politically incorrect, made it clear at every turn that, in his opinion, whenever racial difference is portrayed in any way shape or form, it is already tantamount to racism. As far as he was concerned, there could be no such thing as a benign interest in racial nuances, not in our day, not in any day. While I certainly agreed – and continue to agree – that racial theory has no foundation whatsoever, I already found myself wondering if artists' interest in racial nuances are always first and foremost indications of some sort of prejudice. For one thing, I could look back on many encounters with various people, German and non-German, which seemed to indicate that the notion of race and racial categories holds some sort of greater fascination, independent of racial prejudice.

Just months earlier, for instance, in Berlin, I had met a German woman whose petite build and rounded features were enough to make her and her friends ponder whether she had some distant Slavic blood. There was nothing negative about this – on the contrary, it seemed to be regarded as something attractive. This also reminded me of another acquaintance from longer ago. As a high-school student in America, I befriended a girl of Slavic descent who had exotic-looking eyes that attracted attention. She had taken to telling other kids that she was 'Czech-Mongolian', in reference to the Mongol invasions of Eastern Europe during the Middle Ages. Thus, I was quite amused when, years later, I read Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* and encountered the character Clawdia Chauchat.

In Berlin, I also befriended a young German from Schleswig-Holstein, who explained to me one afternoon that he felt that much of his character was inborn. Without condemning other races, he said that he considered himself firstly a 'Mensch' but secondly a 'Germane' or a 'Nordmann'. Similar to any number of racial theorists at the turn of the century, he went on to defend his forefathers, the Vikings, as a highly spiritual folk and not at all like the barbarian people they have been made out to be. More recently, I met a young German who, upon hearing a summary of the last chapter of my dissertation, expressed his feeling that Latin men

truly are biologically different – that they had more testosterone, which makes them more excitable.

I would hasten to add, however, that there is nothing particularly German about any of this. For instance, upon finding out that I was half-Jewish, an Englishwoman once told me that Jewish blood was ‘good blood’, and went on to qualify this statement for longer than I cared to listen. And even Jews themselves are not immune to such hapless romanticism. I recall a Jewish professor of political science who had at first assumed that I was a gentile – simply because I was taking German – but who, upon finding out that I was half-Jewish, covered her face and laughed, saying that up until now, she had thought that I was the first gentile she had ever been able to relate to. Later – obviously relieved that I had Jewish blood after all – this same teacher went so far as to explain my intellectual capabilities in terms of my Jewishness. ‘It’s in your blood,’ she said.

Even now, even when science has long since proven that race is little more than a myth, even among people who are not essentially racist, the idea of racial difference continues to hold a powerful allure. Thus, one of the aims of this dissertation is to look at the history of what in fact may be a hidden, contemporary phenomenon.

Despite the interest it holds for me, considering my own background, I have avoided touching on issues of Jewishness in this dissertation. The principal reason for this is that Jews hardly ever occur in Marie Madeleine’s writing – as far as I can tell, only three times, and in highly insignificant circumstances – and since my study revolves around her work, it would be inappropriate to go into detail about something which has little relation to it. It is telling, however, that Jews so rarely occur in Madeleine’s writing. I am inclined to believe that the portrayal of Jews simply interested her very little – that she found nothing particularly romantic nor particularly absurd about Jewishness. On the same token, though Jewish figures do occur in the work of Thomas Mann or Eduard von Keyserling, they are by no means more frequent than either Slavic or Latin characters, who are portrayed with equal, or even greater artistic relish. The same goes for any number of German authors at the turn of the century. And yet, whenever race becomes a topic in the study of turn-of-the-century German literature, it is almost inevitably in the context of anti-Semitism. Thus, although I do not wish to belittle the problem of anti-Semitism, I am quite happy to avoid dwelling on it because I would like to prove that it can be done. I would like to prove that we can have an extended discourse on race in turn-of-the-century Germany without focussing on anti-Semitism. It is in fact surprising how easily this can be done, contrary to the oft stated theory that Jews have always been

the chief representative of racial alterity in German consciousness. According to my findings, even as late as World War I (and particularly during this time, considering whom the Germans were combating) it was the Slavic and Latin peoples who took on this role. Only with the Germany's defeat, and the German desire for an internal scapegoat, does anti-Semitism truly get underway to the extent that it clearly overshadows preoccupations with Slavs and Latins.

The dissertation is structured as follows. Firstly, since I am focussing on an author who has never before been the subject of a dissertation or book-length study, I have included a short biography. My research into this matter led me to her illustrious grandson, the Washington-based rocket scientist Jesco von Puttkamer – himself an author of (science) fiction during his youth – who ultimately put me in touch with his stepmother, Delia von Puttkamer, the third wife of Marie Madeleine's son. Mrs. Puttkamer heard quite a few stories from her late husband about his eccentric mother, and she seems to be the most reliable living source of biographical information on Marie Madeleine. Otherwise, I sifted through encyclopaedias, memoirs, journals and newspapers of the day and have included in the first chapter what little of interest I have been able to turn up in this fashion. Madeleine, as her descendants like to emphasise, was a surprisingly private individual, considering the relatively brazen nature of her writing.

In the same chapter, I go on to explore how her work has been received – here, at least, there is a lot more documentation available – and, in the second chapter, I examine her first major publication, *Auf Kypros* (1900). Though this book of poetry does not exhibit much in the way of racial themes, I have devoted a chapter to it all the same, exploring its preoccupation with eroticism, paganism and oblivion, and how this ties in with Madeleine's later preoccupation with race. I find that this is necessary because this is the first foundational study of Madeleine's work, thus, her first and most popular book deserves special mention in spite of the themes I have chosen to concentrate on. In chapter three, using Madeleine's later work as a basis, I explore general issues of race in turn-of-the-century culture, particularly the ideas of racial beauty and a racially based personality and the question of racial mixture. Here, Madeleine's cultural milieu, the treatment of race in artistic, scholarly, and journalistic circles is explored in particular depth. Then, in the following three chapters, I go on to treat Madeleine's portrayal of specific races – the Teutons, Slavs and Latins – once again drawing parallels to other authors and thinkers of the day.

Since Marie Madeleine's stories are virtually unknown, it is often necessary to explain their settings and plot lines in detail. I have generally made an effort to do so

as succinctly as possible, but I have sometimes avoided being too concise, where I feel that the reader has an opportunity to get to know some further idiosyncrasies of Marie Madeleine's work. It is also for this reason that some of my citations may appear overly long at times. In such cases, I wish to convey the full thrust of Madeleine's kitsch style.

Finally, I would like to add that most of the racial terminology I make use of should be fairly clear to the reader from the outset, and where it is not, it should become clear in the course of reading the appropriate chapters. Special attention, however, should be given to the term 'Teuton', which is used throughout the study. It is intended as nothing more than a translation of the German word 'Germane'. A 'Germane', in turn-of-the-century German consciousness, was not necessarily a German, but anyone of blond, blue-eyed, Nordic stock – the Dutch and the Scandinavians were considered Teutons, and in some conceptions, so were the English and Scots, or even the French nobility. It is also important to remember – and more difficult for modern readers to grasp – that it was possible for a German to not be regarded as primarily 'germanisch'. This was not only the case regarding Germans of Jewish background but also Germans from the South or East, who were thought to have considerable Latin or Slavic admixture.

As to the first publication dates of Marie Madeleine's books, I have made use of the thorough research already conducted by Petra Budke and Jutta Schulze for their reference work *Schriftstellerinnen in Berlin 1871 bis 1945*.<sup>3</sup> As of yet, I have found little to contradict their findings.

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<sup>3</sup> See Petra Budke & Jutta Schulze, *Schriftstellerinnen in Berlin 1871-1945*. Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1995, pp. 255-7.



## **CHAPTER 1: THE LIFE AND WORK OF A FEMALE DECADENT**

### **I) A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MARIE MADELEINE**

Little can be known for sure about the life of Marie Madeleine. She never published any memoirs, nor does she appear in any detail in anyone else's memoirs. It is likely that Marie Madeleine wrote letters, to her publishers at the very least, but so far no letters have been found. Meanwhile, though Marie Madeleine died as late as 1944, there are few people alive today who can recall much in the way of details regarding her life. Madeleine's closest living relatives, her grandchildren, know little about her, and what they do know is generally not first hand; she seems to have had hardly any personal contact with her grandchildren. It is tempting to look for clues about Marie Madeleine in her work, which often seems to shed light on her life. But there is usually no way to prove that these seemingly autobiographical elements of her writing are in any way factual. The following brief biography restricts itself to what little we can know with relative certainty about the life of this enigmatic author.

#### **East Prussian Beginnings**

Marie Madeleine was born Gertrud Günther on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1881 in the East Prussian town of Eydtkuhnen to Louis Günther, a merchant, and Emmy Simonson<sup>1</sup>. She had an older brother, Erich, and a younger brother, Paul, who would become a journalist and with whom she would write *Die letzte Hürde* (1907), a collection of short stories. She may have had other siblings but there appears to be no proof of their existence. Nothing is known about Marie Madeleine as a child except that she spent the early part of her childhood in Eydtkuhnen and later moved with her family to Berlin. However, the town of Eydtkuhnen itself deserves some mention, as its peculiar atmosphere may have influenced Marie Madeleine's writing. Today it lies in the disconnected Russian province of Kaliningrad, on the Lithuanian border, and bears the name of Chernyshevskoye. During Marie Madeleine's youth, it was located on German East Prussia's border with Russia and was one of the most important frontiers between these two empires. Since the Russian and German railway tracks were of different widths, it also functioned as a transfer station. Thus, Eydtkuhnen was not completely a backwater town. The famous luxury train 'Nord-Express' between St. Petersburg and Paris stopped here.

In her diary, the young and worldly Marie Bashkirtseff, briefly sojourning in Eydtkuhnen in August 1876, first described the town in a flattering light:

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<sup>1</sup> These are the names of Marie Madeleine's parents as seen on her marriage licence.



‘Eydtkünnen [sic] possède une charmante allée, bien pavée et ombragée, toute garnie à droite de gentilles petites maisons fort propres; il y a même deux espèces de cafés et une sorte de restaurant’.<sup>2</sup> She enjoyed her stay at the ‘Hôtel de Russie’ (p. 185), ‘la bienheureuse auberge d’Eydtkünnen’ (p. 187), which no doubt catered to just such Russian aristocrats passing through. A day later, however, the capricious young Bashkirtseff was already bored stiff: ‘Un ciel gris, un vent froid, quelques juifs dans la rue, de temps en temps le bruit d’une charrette et des inquiétudes de tous genres à foison’ (p. 188). Bashkirtseff is likely to have been one of many wealthy and luxurious Russians who ended up spending a few hours or a few nights in Eydtkuhnen, frequenting its two cafés, and continuing on to bigger and better places. For this reason alone, it is little wonder that the young bourgeois Marie Madeleine, witnessing and probably envying such an elegant spectacle from an early age, developed a lifelong preoccupation with women of the Russian upper class.

### **The Early Success of a Young ‘Slav’**

In early 1897, when Marie Madeleine was fifteen and already living in Berlin, her first poem was published in the Berlin journal *Narrenschiff*, edited by Max Sklarek. In the first editions of Madeleine’s first play, *Die drei Nächte* (1901), Sklarek includes an open letter he wrote to Marie Madeleine, in which he describes his first encounter with the author. Here he relates his disbelief as a young girl walked into his office and proceeded to recite him her poetry. In no time, he came to the conclusion that she was a ‘gottbegnadete Dichterin von ausgeprägter Eigenart’.<sup>3</sup> ‘Champagne frappé’ was the first poem Madeleine recited and it was published immediately, in the next edition of *Narrenschiff*. Further poems and prose sketches were included in later editions of *Narrenschiff*, and all of the poems were published again in *Auf Kypros* (1900).

Madeleine herself recreated these events in the seemingly autobiographical novel *Pantherkätzchen* (1913). The character Monika Birken would seem to have much in common with Marie Madeleine, at least as a child. The novel opens as Monika, a vivacious, romantic and iconoclastic young girl from Berlin, visits old friends and family in a provincial town in East Prussia from whence she originally hails. At fifteen, Monika has already read some racy literature and has begun to write love poetry herself, much to the chagrin of her mother and brothers. Her father is already dead, just as Marie Madeleine’s father seems to have died while she was still

<sup>2</sup> Marie Bashkirtseff, *Journal*. Paris: Mazarine, 1980, p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> Max Sklarek, ‘An Frau Baronin von Puttkamer’, pp. 7-11 in Marie Madeleine, *Die drei Nächte*, Berlin: Sklarek, 1901, p. 8.

young. However, later events in Monika's life diverge greatly from what we know to be the case of Marie Madeleine's life. The plot of *Pantherkätzchen* is based heavily on Emmy von Rhoden's *Trotzkopf* (1883), a novel written for adolescent girls, in which a young girl's iconoclasm is tamed in marriage. For this reason and for the obvious reason that it is merely a novel, we can only speculate as to the autobiographical nature of *Pantherkätzchen*.

In his preface to *Die drei Nächte*, Max Sklarek describes Marie Madeleine's features as unmistakably 'Slavic' and indicates that she recited her poem 'mit singendem Tonfall in hartem, russischen Accent' (p. 8). Sklarek's immediate classification of Marie Madeleine into a racial category is characteristic of the day and it appears that Madeleine herself made every effort to seem like a Slav. Her real accent was unlikely to have sounded at all Russian; at the most, she would have had an East Prussian dialect, which might have differed considerably from the dialect spoken in Berlin, but was not at all Slavic. The playful young Madeleine probably put on this Russian accent for fun. Her work is full of decadent, Russian *femmes fatales*, so much so that we might speculate as to whether this figure was a fantasy role, an alter ego for the author herself. In the photo provided at the front of *Die drei Nächte*, Madeleine is wearing a Russian fur cap,<sup>4</sup> and in a seemingly autobiographical poem of 1902, 'Die Geschwister', she also refers to her 'Slavic' blood. Yet even before the publication of this poem or of *Die drei Nächte*, journalists of the day refer to Marie Madeleine's Slavic heritage. In 1900, Hans Land calls her a 'Slavin'<sup>5</sup> and *Die Woche* states that she is 'slavischer Abkunft'.<sup>6</sup> There is nothing in *Auf Kypros* that could indicate Madeleine's race, so it seems that Madeleine herself was propagating this Slavic image. Whether Madeleine truly had any immediate Slavic ancestry is questionable. Neither her father's surname nor her mother's maiden name is of Slavic origin. However, it is possible that Marie Madeleine, as an East Prussian, did have at least some distant Slavic forefathers since Germans and Slavs had been living side by side in this region for centuries. As to her appearance, Marie Madeleine could certainly have passed for a Slav, as notions of her day and age defined such things. Rather than blond, blue-eyed and gaunt like a stereotypical Teuton, Madeleine was dark-haired and dark-eyed with wide, high cheekbones (figs. 2-3). Though such things are supposed to have little importance in our time, they could exercise considerable influence in Madeleine's day.

<sup>4</sup> See fig. 1. Illustrations, including full bibliographic information, can be found at the end of this study.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Land, 'Auf Kypros' in *Das neue Jahrhundert*, 19 May 1900, p. 247.

<sup>6</sup> Anon., 'Personalien' in *Die Woche*, no. 46, 17 November 1900, p. 2028.

## Early Marriage and Unwanted Attention

On 2 August 1900, the same year that *Auf Kypros* was published, Marie Madeleine, aged nineteen, married the 52-year-old Baron Heinrich Georg Ludwig von Puttkamer. According to the marriage licence, Madeleine's father was already deceased at this time, while her mother, aged thirty-nine, was present as a witness. Not only an enormous difference in age but also a considerable difference in class separated Marie Madeleine from her husband. Madeleine was of the petty bourgeoisie, while the Puttkamers are an old, aristocratic family. Like all able men of the Prussian aristocracy, Heinrich von Puttkamer had been an officer in the military; he participated in all three of Prussia's wars leading to German unification and was highly decorated. He ultimately reached the standing of major general. Nonetheless, Heinrich von Puttkamer was, like his young wife, something of a maverick. Before he married Marie Madeleine, he had already left the military because of differences with his divisional commander. He would later publish a book, 'Patriotische Nörgeleien' (1906), in which he criticised the backwardness and impracticality of the German Army of his day and chronicled the myriad social problems afflicting its officers, for which he offered constructive, progressive solutions. Many of these problems, such as gambling, debts, marriages based on money, and the impoverishment of the Prussian nobility, are also recurring themes in Madeleine's work. Heinrich von Puttkamer's most iconoclastic act, however, was not his criticism of the German army. Rather, it was marrying Marie Madeleine. Her sensual poetry was already notorious in Berlin, and the Puttkamer family was so outraged at having such a woman among their ranks that Heinrich von Puttkamer ended up leaving the Puttkamer *Familienverband*.<sup>7</sup> A photo of Heinrich von Puttkamer, provided in his book, reveals him to be a handsome and elegant man despite his age (fig. 4).

Marie Madeleine lived with her husband in Grunewald, a wealthy suburb of Berlin. Unfortunately for our purposes, she seems to have had little contact with the Berlin literary scene at the time. Hardly any authors make reference to her, though her work, which was quite prolific in the first decade of the century, was often reviewed in the newspapers and was selling well. It is as if she spent much of her time at home writing. Following *Auf Kypros*, she published a few new poems in the Berlin journal *Die Woche*, most of which would soon be published again in her second book of poetry *An der Liebe Narrenseil* (1901). The majority of her later poems and stories seem to have been published directly in book form.

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<sup>7</sup> All of this information regarding Heinrich von Puttkamer can be found in the Gothaer Adelskalender, entry XIX, p. 1214.

In January 1901, Madeleine participated in the première of Ernst von Wolzogen's 'Überbrett'l', Berlin's first cabaret. As the *Tägliche Rundschau* noted on 12 January, 'Bei der Vorstellung von Wolzogens 'Buntem Theater' gelegentlich des Goethefestes am 17. in der Philharmonie wird Marie Madelaine [sic] eigene Dichtungen "rezitieren und durch Mimik illustrieren"''.<sup>8</sup> She recited, among other poems, her opulent and darkly pretty 'Von Kypros nach Golgotha'.<sup>9</sup> The cabaret was an enormous success, but there is no evidence that Marie Madeleine made any further appearances in the 'Überbrett'l', which quickly became a Berlin institution. Klaus Völker claims that Marie Madeleine was a 'Mitarbeiterin' of not only the 'Überbrett'l' but also of 'Zum hungrigen Pegasus',<sup>10</sup> but there seems to be no evidence to substantiate this claim. However, at least two of Marie Madeleine's poems were later turned into chansons by leading cabaret composers for Wolzogen's cabaret. Julius Urgiss composed a chanson for 'Vorlesung' and Oscar Strauss for 'Moderne Treue',<sup>11</sup> an ironic poem in which a young lady writes letters to four different lovers, assuring each one of her steadfast loyalty.

The publication in 1902 of *An der Liebe Narrenseil*, Madeleine's second collection of poetry, is of interest for biographical purposes because of its opening poem 'An Apollo', which is set aside from the rest of the poems. Unlike most other poems that Marie Madeleine wrote, 'An Apollo' is clearly intended as a personal appeal to her audience. It provides us with a good idea of how the public was reacting to her work, and of how she felt about these reactions:

Vergieß, o Phöbus Apollo  
 Daß ich je einen Vers gedichtet!  
 Ich sage voll tiefster Zerknirschung:  
 Was habe ich angerichtet!

Traumlieder, die ich gesungen  
 Mit fünfzehn und sechzehn Jahr  
 Die nennt man 'Emanationen  
 Einer Frau, die viel erfahren!'

Und ein Heer von hysterischen Weibern  
 Im ganzen deutschen Land,  
 Singt jetzt von 'weißen Leibern'  
 Und von 'glühender Lippen Brand'.

Tagtäglich bekomme ich Briefe:  
 'Du wecktest viel schlummernde Triebe;

<sup>8</sup> Anon., 'Aus dem Programm des Überbrett'l' in *Tägliche Rundschau*, 12 January 1901.

<sup>9</sup> See Rudolf Hösch, *Kabarett von Gestern*, Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1967, pp. 57-58.

<sup>10</sup> See Max Herrmann-Neiße, *Kabarett. Schriften zum Kabarett und zur bildenden Kunst* (ed. by Klaus Völker). Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1988, footnote to p. 210.

<sup>11</sup> Walter Rösler, *Das Chanson im deutschen Kabarett 1901-1933*. Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1980, pp. 72 & 81.

Du sangst vom modernen Weibe, -  
Vom Recht auf freieste Liebe!' –

Ich muß ganz offen gestehen:  
Daran hab' ich garnicht gedacht!  
Ich hab' meine Lieder geschrieben  
Blos, weil es mir Spaß gemacht!

Ich kann absolut nicht begreifen,  
Warum Euch die Köpfe verdreht  
Das, was ich bescheiden nenne: -  
Die Lyrik der Pubertät!<sup>12</sup>

The poem indicates that Marie Madeleine regarded herself as a writer of fantasy. She was not particularly concerned with real-life causes and certainly had no intention of being an icon of feminism or free love. As we will see, some scholars felt that she was under crippling moral pressure and that she decided to tone down the eroticism in the poetry collections following *Auf Kypros*. However, Marie Madeleine's apparent distaste for feminism is not necessarily evidence that she was reactionary when it came to every aspect of women's issues. She simply was not interested in feminism as a political movement. If anything, she was probably too iconoclastic to feel comfortable with any organised movement. We might venture to say that she practised her own brand of feminism, which was personal, not political – an Epicurean sort of feminism. She enjoyed travelling, looking good and wearing extravagant clothing, which she did to please primarily herself. Apparently, she particularly enjoyed sporting bizarre hats and dressing up in men's clothes. One photograph, a private possession of the Puttkamer family, shows her wearing the uniform of a Prussian officer, probably her husband's, complete with the *Pickelhaube* atop her head. She was a rare example of a female dandy, which certainly fits with her unusual status as a female writer of decadent literature. The message she sent to her readers, in what was still a highly repressed society, was that it was acceptable for a woman to enjoy her sexuality and to let her fantasy run wild. Of course, her marriage to a nobleman, who seems to have been something of a free spirit himself, probably made this considerably easier for her than for most other women of her day.

### **Motherhood and Escapism**

On 19 March 1903, Marie Madeleine gave birth to a son, Jesco Günther Heinrich von Puttkamer,<sup>13</sup> who remained her only child. Not much is known about Marie Madeleine's relationship with her son – or with her husband for that matter.

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<sup>12</sup> Marie Madeleine, *An der Liebe Narrenseil*. Bremerhaven: L.v.Vangerow, 8<sup>th</sup> edition (date unavailable), pp. 9-10.

<sup>13</sup> See the Gothaer Adelskalender, entry XX, p. 1323.

According to one encyclopaedic entry, Marie Madeleine left Berlin in 1905 and divided her time between Baden-Baden and Nice,<sup>14</sup> but to what extent she was with her husband and child is not entirely clear, though it seems that she was rarely with them. Marie Madeleine's son related to his third wife, Delia von Puttkamer, that he was raised chiefly by his elderly father and Madeleine's mother. Marie Madeleine, he said, was generally away from home but would return on occasion only to treat him like a little doll, putting curlers in his hair and dressing him in black velvet suits with lace collars, which, of course, annoyed the boy beyond belief.<sup>15</sup>

When her husband died, probably in 1914, Madeleine sent her son to the same *Kadettenschule* that his father had attended. On the day that she gave him over to the school, she once again dressed him up in the aforementioned garb. The other boys beat him up, and when he attempted to inform the supervisor, the latter turned his back on him. The humiliation was so deep that young Jesco ended up remaining in sick bay for many months before he felt comfortable showing himself again. In the years that followed, Madeleine's only concern for her son was that he marry. She apparently spent an inordinate amount of time looking up aristocratic families with marriageable daughters.

Thus, unfortunately, it seems that Madeleine was just as escapist and fantastical in motherhood as in authorship. Her son was nonetheless devoted to her, and it appears that the two might have had, on occasion, a closer relationship as Madeleine approached old age. In 1932, for instance, Madeleine published a mystery novel, *Die drei Testamente des Fürsten X*, the first in a series that was supposedly based on the notes of Rafael Schermann, a well-known graphologist. But the following five editions in the Schermann series, all of them published in 1932, seem to have been written by Marie Madeleine's son, who had considerable training in journalistic writing, having worked in Hamburg as a young man with his journalist-uncle, Madeleine's younger brother Paul. However, to what extent Marie Madeleine and her son collaborated together on this effort, which was probably a desperate attempt to earn some money, remains unclear.

As to Marie Madeleine's marital virtues, there were plenty of rumours of lovers. Such rumours would have surely surrounded any woman who wrote sensual poetry, but there is also talk in the Puttkamer family of a certain Herr von Cramster,

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<sup>14</sup> See Franz Brümmer, ed., *Lexikon der deutschen Dichter und Prosaisten vom Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Gegenwart*. Leipzig, Reclam, 6<sup>th</sup> edition (date unavailable), vol. 6, p. 369.

<sup>15</sup> This is all the more interesting considering a very early prose sketch Marie Madeleine wrote for *Das Narrenschiff*, in which she portrays a frivolous young mother who sends her little boy to an impoverished caretaker. At one point, she has the caretaker dress him up in a



who was apparently Madeleine's lifelong friend as well as a travel companion and possible lover. According to her son, Madeleine also travelled a great deal with her husband. He confirmed that they were often in Baden-Baden, where the ageing general benefited from the healing baths. They also spent a few years in Paris, where Madeleine's husband appears to have had a position as an attaché. This, it would seem, is how Marie Madeleine picked up her extensive knowledge of the Paris scene, which features on occasion in her work. But to what extent Madeleine was truly as much of a *femme fatale* as some of her texts might intimate remains open to question. A fan of her poetry, the German-American author George Sylvester Viereck, claimed that she was merely 'the conventional wife of a pensioned general.'<sup>16</sup> Viereck went on to explain:

Her passionate [sic] studies are cries from the depths of her potential selves. In reality, she is perfectly respectable and perfectly *bourgeoise*. Her life is wholesome because it is complete. She is virtuous in her private life, but a Faustina in song. Impulses which, if suppressed, would have poisoned her life, escape through the safety-valve of literary expression. (p. 139)

From where Viereck draws such seemingly first-hand knowledge of Marie

Madeleine's life is unclear and it may be nothing more than his personal opinion.

Nonetheless, it is probably closer to the truth than the lurid fantasies regarding Marie Madeleine that were more common at the time.

### **Morphine, War and Death**

When Marie Madeleine was in her thirties, her elderly husband died of pneumonia. The exact date of his death, however, remains a bit unclear. The *Gothaer Adelskalender*, an almanac of the German nobility, states that he died on 25 August 1918<sup>17</sup> as does an encyclopaedic entry that moreover claims Madeleine was residing in Berlin around this time or shortly thereafter, while spending the winters in Noli, Italy.<sup>18</sup> However, this date contradicts a more reliable source: Marie Madeleine's own family. Madeleine's son always insisted that he was eleven years old when his father died, which would make the year 1914. However, the date of 25 August (or thereabouts) may still apply since Madeleine's son also indicated that his father had just regained his military commission, three weeks before the onset of World War I, and that he died shortly afterwards, right before the war started.

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blue velvet suit, only to laugh at his ridiculous appearance during her next visit. See *Fiffi* in *Das Narrenschiff*, 1898, pp. 642-3.

<sup>16</sup> George Sylvester Viereck, *Confessions of a Barbarian*. New York, Moffat, Yard and Co., 1910, p. 139.

<sup>17</sup> Gothaer Adelskalender, entry XIX, p. 1214.

<sup>18</sup> Brümmer, *Lexikon der deutschen Dichter und Prosaisten*, supplementary volume, p. 257.



According to her son, Madeleine was in Alassio, Italy at the time, where she owned a villa. When she returned to Berlin to find her husband dead, she went into hysterics and the doctors prescribed her morphine. Although morphine is a theme in Madeleine's work as early as 1908, this is thought to be her first exposure to the drug, which she would continue to use for the rest of her life. She became a certified addict, which meant that she did not have to pay for it.

In the years and decades that followed, Madeleine remained a prolific writer, hardly changing the style and themes of her work throughout her career, which ended with several publications in 1932. Narcotic intoxication, however, increasingly complemented erotic intoxication as a major feature of both her poetry and prose. It is also safe to say that, as the twenties progressed and the Weimar Republic collapsed, Madeleine published less and less, and most of what she published was of a particularly uninspired nature. Her books of the twenties also failed to meet with the same success as her earlier books, which is probably one reason she published an anthology of some of her early works in 1924, though many of these works were still in print at this time. It seems only logical to attribute this decline of her creativity to her morphine addiction.

Marie Madeleine's son, however, felt that his mother was more psychologically than physically addicted to the drug. Apparently, she never upped her dosage. Her son claimed that she took the same dosage in 1937, when he last saw her, as she did decades earlier, upon her husband's death. At one point, apparently, the doctors even put a placebo into Madeleine's needle for eight months without her so much as noticing. When she finally found out, she immediately began taking real morphine again. This seems almost unbelievable. If it is true, it would confirm all the more that Marie Madeleine's morphine consumption had more to do with an infatuation with the image of the morphine addict than with anything else. It is an image that she certainly romanticises in her work on many occasions.

Perhaps the negative effects of morphine on Marie Madeleine were not so pronounced after all. She certainly lived a long life for a morphine addict and she seems to have been in fairly good health nearly the whole time. Thus, we might look to other possible reasons as to why her talent and success, which were variable to begin with, dwindled away. One factor may have been the inflation in Germany following World War I. Marie Madeleine lost virtually all of all her earnings from her publications and the Puttkamers lost all of their fortune. The Puttkamers had in fact never been enormously rich; one could say that they belonged to the impoverished, Prussian nobility that features so often in Madeleine's work. Thus, Madeleine came under intense pressure to churn out popular books, which must have

been a tiring and uninspiring situation. Meanwhile, after 1932, she ceased publishing altogether, and we can almost certainly attribute this to the Nazi takeover. Decadent literature, Madeleine's mainstay, was antithetic to the Third Reich and, as we will soon discover, her ethnic background may have also been problematic. At any rate, it was probably most advantageous for Madeleine to keep a low profile as the thirties progressed. Indeed, it seems that Madeleine had been living in Berlin in the twenties but moved away to quiet Wiesbaden as the thirties progressed. Then, mid-way through World War II, she checked into a sanatorium in Katzenelnbogen, a town in the Taunus hills north of Wiesbaden. This is where she died, on 30 September 1944.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, after setting up a pension for his mother, Marie Madeleine's son left for Shanghai in 1937 as an attaché. He remained there up until the end of the war, when he ran into trouble with NATO for hiding Japanese colleagues from the Allies. Upon his eventual return to Germany, where he remained in custody until 1950, he suspected that the Nazi doctors at the sanatorium had taken the rest of Marie Madeleine's money and valuables and even helped to hasten her death. This was not an unheard of practice; it is even likely to have happened. Drug addicts were considered degenerate and were even shipped off to concentration camps. Of course, at this point, as the Third Reich was crumbling under the stress of war, there was little to stop doctors from putting any of their patients to sleep.

This is the extent of our biographical knowledge, except for one interesting point. Before the onset of World War II, Madeleine's son had managed to alter his grandmother's maiden name in the *Gothaer Adelskalender* from Simonson to the more Aryan-sounding Siemßen. He did this in order to protect his mother and himself from persecution by the Nazis.<sup>20</sup> As of yet, there appears to be no concrete evidence that Emmy Simonson was actually Jewish. Simonson is not necessarily a Jewish name, and it is possible that Marie Madeleine's son simply wanted to make sure that his mother was not mistaken for a Jew. However, after World War II, Madeleine's son always told his family that he had Jewish blood on his mother's side. Interestingly, on Marie Madeleine's death certificate, which was filled out on 2 October 1944, the maiden name of her mother is 'Simonsohn'. It seems that the Nazi doctors were more or less aware of the facts, despite Madeleine's son's efforts – and possibly on account of Madeleine's own testimony. Whether this played any role in Madeleine's death, however, belongs to the realm of pure speculation. There is no evidence that Marie Madeleine considered herself a Jew – there is only evidence that

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<sup>19</sup> This information can be found on Marie Madeleine's death certificate.

she considered herself a Slav. However, Jews are conspicuously absent from her work. Considering the frequency of Jewish characters in the German literature of the day – and considering Madeleine's fascination with racial variety – this is indeed intriguing.

## II) A HISTORY OF MARIE MADELEINE'S RECEPTION

Marie Madeleine was prolific but she was certainly no literary genius. Few texts that she wrote come close to transcending the realm of kitsch, popular literature. Her style, in both poetry and prose, is lucid and readable but also highly formulaic and repetitive. It is seldom truly artistic. Dashes and ellipses abound in her work, but feats of subtle craftsmanship or stylistic innovation are generally absent. Thematically, Madeleine was often controversial, sometimes downright eccentric, but seldom profound. Only on rare occasions is there a glimmer of a literary moment in her work – generally in a strange, poignant image she creates or in a humorous, Maupassantian twist of plot. Her work has far more cultural-historical than literary value. It is an excellent window into issues of race, class and gender as well as into sexuality and drugs at the turn of the century. It is also a superb artefact of the hyper-aesthetic mentality and the peculiar atmosphere of decay, nervousness and giddiness, which characterised this period. Madeleine was arguably the only female German author of her day who wholly adopted the aesthetics of decadence. When we furthermore consider that she was widely read, we have reason enough to argue that Germanists of today should pay more attention to this forgotten author, even if few texts by Marie Madeleine stand on their own as works of art, deserving to be studied in their own right.

### ***Auf Kypros***

Marie Madeleine's legacy remains *Auf Kypros*, her first book of poetry. It is among the few texts by Madeleine that can be regarded as a true original in the way it perfectly captures the fantastical mood of adolescent longing, while attaining, at certain moments, a level of Dionysian, ecstatic beauty. As even Madeleine's contemporaries recognised, *Auf Kypros* is also of considerable historical significance. It was one of the first books written in any language, in which a woman openly gave voice to sexually aggressive impulses. Only the French decadent Rachilde could be regarded as having anticipated Madeleine – but she wrote third-person novels rather

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<sup>20</sup> pers. com.

than first-person poetry. As *Das litterarische Echo* recognised, *Auf Kypros* marked ‘eine neue Station’ in women’s poetry with its glorification of a new female type: ‘die Spielart des aktiven weiblichen Don Juans, des werbenden, begehrenden, besiegenden Weibes’.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, Madeleine’s gender and age remain central aspects of the reception of *Auf Kypros*. Everything about the situation was scandalous: a woman of no more than nineteen publishing a book of erotic fantasies in verse, most of which she had written years earlier. Even her pseudonym, the French form of Mary Magdalene, seemed as if it were designed to provoke Prussian society. But perhaps what was most scandalous was the fact that the poetry in *Auf Kypros* appealed to a wide audience. Although it was considered inappropriate, it was an enormous success and remained so for years, reaching forty-six editions. In fact, Madeleine’s son believed that his mother earned more than one million Reichsmark from *Auf Kypros* before she was twenty. As a puritanical contemporary of Marie Madeleine lamented in 1902, ‘es ist, so unglaublich es klingt, eine Thatsache, daß man die Gedichte der Marie Madeleine auf den Rokokotischen der Boudoirs findet, daß man sie in den Salons der sogenannten “höchsten Kreise” singt’.<sup>22</sup> This enthusiasm cannot be explained by the curiosity surrounding the book alone. Other scandalous publications – and there were certainly plenty of them in turn-of-the-century Germany – did not fair nearly as well, nor did later works by Madeleine, which were equally bold. *Auf Kypros* had something winsome about it – freshness and whimsicality perhaps – that conquered many readers. It seems that Madeleine revealed to Prussia exactly what it was yearning for beneath all the repression of pragmatic, Protestant military culture. Writing in 1907, Alfred Kind, an iconoclastic scholar of woman’s role in human culture and history, humorously described the milieu as upper class Germany rapidly developed an obsession with *Auf Kypros*:

Ein Publikum, das sich in der Regel nur an Kurszetteln und Renntelegrammen begeisterte, das Gedichtbücher unter die herkömmlichen Einsegnungsgeschenke rechnete, ließ plötzlich ein schmales Bändchen verwundert und kopfschüttelnd von Hand zu Hand gehen. Man fand mit einem Male, daß Gedichte ungemein interessant sein können. Man fand Dinge abgehandelt, die verständlich waren, und die gewisse Erinnerungen weckten. Das war so anders, als die gebräuchliche überirdische Sehnsucht und dergleichen schmerzliches Allotria, anders als die gewitterschwangeren Balladen oder die sanften, zum Schluß in einem Küsschen verschwindenden Landschaften. Ein keckes Fräulein, das alles Wissenswerte zu wissen schien, tanzte auf den Kahlköpfen der verblüfften Zuhörer einen niedlichen Cancan und tirilierte von ihren tausendunddrei Geliebten mit einer Miene der

<sup>21</sup> Josef Ettlinger, ‘Auf Kypros’ in *Das litterarische Echo*, 1 May 1900, p. 1089.

<sup>22</sup> Ilse Eckart, ‘Die “Ehrlichkeit” des modernen Weibes’, pp. 199-202 in *Die Frau*, vol. 9, no. 4, January 1902, p. 200.

Selbstverständlichkeit, als wundere sie sich im Stillen, wie sie nur mit so wenig Verehrern zufrieden sein könne. Als man wieder zu sich kam, meinten einige, die Morgenröte einer neuen Literatur sei angebrochen; andere orakelten von Dekadenz und sittlichem Verfall; noch andere erklärten, sie warteten gespannt auf die Entwicklung der Dinge.<sup>23</sup>

It is indeed amusing to observe how certain journalists attempted to cope with the abrupt appearance of a very young woman, who was writing mouth-wateringly sensual poetry. The *Breslauer Zeitung* could not help but dwell on Madeleine's age and gender, resorting to misogynist platitudes and references to female physiology, perhaps in order to undermine the fact of her apparent talent:

Das Charakterbild der Marie Madeleine schwankt. Siebzehn Jahre ist sie alt, so sagt man. Man möchte es kaum glauben. Welches Weib sagt auch die Wahrheit über ihr Alter! Und es kommt doch die poetische Lizenz hinzu. Sollte Marie aber wirklich erst siebzehn Jahre alt sein, so kann sie dem Himmel danken für das Geschenk, das ihr mühelos in den Schoß gefallen ist: Die souveräne Beherrschung der dichterischen Form. Selbst wenn man die bei Frauen früher als beim Manne eintretende Reife in Betracht zieht, ist es staunenswert, wie ein siebzehnjähriges Mädchen solche formgewandte Verse dichten kann und für jede Stimmung das passende Versmaß findet.<sup>24</sup>

Such sentiments were echoed by *Die Umschau*, which was pleasantly astounded at the 'Frühreife und Keckheit'<sup>25</sup> of the girl-poet, and by *Die Gesellschaft*, which considered that, for Madeleine's supposed age, 'sie eine erstaunliche, ja sogar seltsam erschreckende Blüte erreicht [hätte]'.<sup>26</sup> While *Die Umschau* likened Madeleine's talent to 'einer Lokomotive, welche führerlos mit rasender Schnelligkeit auf falschem Gleise dahinsauert' (p. 773), *Die Gesellschaft* felt there was every sign that Madeleine would eventually transcend the 'überschwülen Hauch ihrer Dämmerungen' to write healthier and more heartfelt poetry in the spirit of the poet Detlev von Liliencron (p. 383). Meanwhile, the *Frankfurter General-Anzeiger* was so flabbergasted by Madeleine's adept mixture of classical elegance and modern perversity that it called her gender into question:

Ist das nicht am Ende eine große Mystifikation? Ist nicht vielleicht diese Donna Marie Madeleine, die [...] in ihren Liedern zwischen der prächtigen Erotik römischer Elegien und den Krankheitsberichten Krafft-Ebingscher Bücher bedenklich hin und her pendelt, nicht vielleicht...ein Mann? ein sehr talentvoller, sehr krankhaft veranlagter, oder sehr...ironischer Mann?<sup>27</sup>

In any case, one thing is apparent: newspapers agreed that *Auf Kypros* was a brilliant if somewhat raw gemstone. As countless other newspapers attest, *Auf Kypros*

<sup>23</sup> Alfred Kind, 'Marie Madeleine', pp. 221-8 in *Die rote Rose Leidenschaft* (ed. by Sibylle Kaldewey). München: Matthes & Seitz, 1977, p. 223.

<sup>24</sup> See 'Stimmen der Presse über Marie Madeleine' in Marie Madeleine's *Auf Kypros*, Berlin: Est-Est, 1910, p. 382.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Pollack, 'Neue Belletristik', pp. 772-4 in *Die Umschau*, vol. 4, no. 39, 22 September 1900, p. 773.

<sup>26</sup> A.R.T. Thilo, 'Auf Kypros', pp. 382-3 in *Die Gesellschaft*, vol. 1, no. 6, 1900, p. 382.

<sup>27</sup> In 'Stimmen der Presse über Marie Madeleine' in Marie Madeleine, *Auf Kypros*, p. 382.



resounded throughout the German-speaking world. It even made a few waves in the English-speaking world. A British poet by the name of Ferdinand E. Kappey published a translation of *Auf Kypros* in 1907, giving it the evocative title *Hydromel and Rue*. Decades on, *Auf Kypros* would still define Madeleine's image. Many critics have never bothered to mention, or even read, any of her other books. Of course, this is often the case; all authors must struggle with being forever identified with their first publication, particularly if it is very popular. Considering the fact that Madeleine's writing sank in quality, this may have been something of a blessing in her case.

### Later Disappointment

Reactions to Marie Madeleine were not always as positive as the above extracts, particularly the reactions from more serious reviewers. This was especially the case after the bewilderment surrounding *Auf Kypros* wore off and Madeleine failed to produce anything as interesting. For their advertisements, publishers managed to dig up journalistic praise of almost every book Madeleine wrote, but no book following *Auf Kypros* would receive the same glowing adulation, particularly in more serious journals, as *Auf Kypros*. Alfred Kind, for instance, was ecstatic about *Auf Kypros* but heavily disappointed by the works that followed. In contrast to many of his contemporaries, however, the sophisticated libertine Kind was not at all disconcerted by Marie Madeleine's seemingly relaxed morals. On the contrary, he felt that public morality had stifled Marie Madeleine's freedom of expression in her publications following *Auf Kypros*:

Aber die allgemeine Dummheit der Menschen ist so gräßlich und ungeschlacht, daß sie allein daran schuld ist, daß der Dichterin die Weiterentwicklung zur völligen *Unbefangenheit* vergällt wurde. Sie hat abgeschworen etwas, was gar nicht von ihr gemeint war. Sie hat vor der plumpen Dummheit eine Reverenz machen müssen. Sie hat ihre wahrhaft schönen, weil unbefangenen Verse weiterhin im Manuskript für sich behalten müssen.<sup>28</sup>

In fact, Kind's worries may not have been unfounded. Aside from being better written, *Auf Kypros* has a certain erotic freedom about it that none of Marie Madeleine's later collections of poetry would come close to matching. But Kind seems to be unaware of the fact that Marie Madeleine later demonstrated equal audacity in other literary genres. The play *Das bißchen Liebe* (1906), for instance, is an exaltation of female, sexual promiscuity, and the best of Marie Madeleine's short stories include poignant scenes of brutally erotic and intoxicated ecstasy. This is hardly the work of someone who was paying respect to moral conventions. Perhaps

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<sup>28</sup> Alfred Kind, 'Marie Madeleine', p. 226

Marie Madeleine simply decided that poetry was not the right genre to give voice to her more controversial fantasies.

Other sophisticated critics of the day were equally ambivalent or even downright negative regarding Marie Madeleine – right from the beginning. Samuel Lublinsky considered Madeleine to be nothing more than a cheap imitator of Heine and insisted that Madeleine's initial success had more to do with an ironic twist of fate – the clash of conservative and progressive philistines – than with the quality of *Auf Kypros*:

Marie Madeleine [...] hatte, als ihr Gedichtband erschien, ein doppeltes Schweineglück: die einen, die echten Philister, tobten wie die Besessenen, so daß die anderen Philister, die gern in Vorurteilslosigkeit und Geistesfreiheit machten, sich veranlaßt fühlten, Frau Baronin Maria gegen die 'Banausen' zu verteidigen.<sup>29</sup>

Lublinsky's scepticism, though exaggerated, is certainly not unfounded. It is without question that Madeleine's popularity was greatly boosted by the scandal surrounding her first work. It is also true that the praise of Marie Madeleine's work, particularly the work that followed *Auf Kypros*, often has a contrived feel about it, as if the reviewers felt obligated to like it, lest they appear closed-minded. But *Auf Kypros* is not nearly as devoid of literary value as the eternal sceptic Lublinsky would like to believe.

Erich Mühsam, meanwhile, in categorising the poetry of his time, differentiated between what he called 'Lyrik' and 'Reimerei'. When analysing erotic poetry, he placed the poet Margarete Beutler in the former category and Marie Madeleine in the latter category:

wie wahr und echt wirkt die bald herbe, bald leis lächelnde Erotik Margarete Beutlers – aus tief Innerem heraus das Ringen des Weibes nach Befreiung von der Konvention, nach Dürfen; – wogegen man die manierten Brutalitäten Marie Madeleines oder gar die perversen Gemeinheiten der Nachtreterin derselben, Dolorosa, halte, die es für die Jetztzeit geschäftlich am praktischsten hält, abwechselnd bigott zu tun und zu schweinigen.<sup>30</sup>

Mühsam makes reference here to a poet by the name of Dolorosa in conjunction with Marie Madeleine, and he would do so again later, in his *Unpolitische Erinnerungen* (1927-9), referring to 'die nymphomanischen und masochistischen Exhibitionismen und Tagessensationen von damals, Marie Madeleine und Dolorosa'.<sup>31</sup> Critics often lumped Marie Madeleine and Dolorosa together, so that, in order to understand Marie Madeleine's reception, it is important to know a little about Dolorosa as well.

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Lublinsky, *Die Bilanz der Moderne*. Berlin: Siegfried Cronbach, 1904, pp. 164-5.

<sup>30</sup> Erich Mühsam, 'Tendenzlyrik' in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2. Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1978, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Erich Mühsam, *Unpolitische Erinnerungen* in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2, p. 519.



## Dolorosa and Other Followers

Dolorosa was born Maria Eichhorn in 1879 in the Silesian town of Giersdorf (now in Poland) and spent her young life as a secretary in Breslau, then as a governess in Hungary, then as a journalist in Berlin, where she married the writer Wilhelm Fischer. They soon divorced. A couple of years after the publication of *Auf Kypros*, Dolorosa published her own book of erotic poetry, *Confirmit te chrysmate* (1902), and she continued to write poetry as well as prose until 1911, when she left for Constantinople, where she seems to have disappeared.<sup>32</sup> Her first work presents a truly bizarre – and typically *fin-de-siècle* – assortment of erotic poems that climaxes with sadomasochism and concludes with hymns of Jewish religiosity and Zionism, for it appears that Dolorosa was Jewish or at least fascinated by Judaism. This, it would seem, is the meaning of Mühsam's phrase 'abwechselnd bigott zu tun und zu schweinigen'.

Dolorosa was a talented cabaret artist. Dressed in a long striped robe, she performed her poetry for Max Tilke's cabaret 'Zum hungrigen Pegasus'. As *Der Welt Spiegel* reported:

Eine der eigenartigsten Erscheinungen dieser neumodischen Künstlergruppe ist ohne Zweifel die Lyrikerin Dolorosa, die unser letztes Bild zeigt; jung, talentvoll, hysterisch... in Gedichten voll Gluth und bizarrer Schöne ihre echte – oder doch virtuos anempfundene – Leidenschaft auströmend.<sup>33</sup>

On paper, however, her poetry is quite disappointing. It was therefore not likely to have been advantageous to Marie Madeleine that critics often associated her with Dolorosa. Nonetheless, the two poets had much in common, as they were both young women who had come to Berlin from provincial towns in the German Empire's easternmost territories. Both poets obviously shared a non-conformist and decidedly non-feminist openness about eroticism. Both were also francophiles. In 1902, Marie Madeleine published *Die Mittelmeerfahrt*, a translation of some of Guy de Maupassant's travel writing, while Dolorosa's lasting claim to posterity was *Sadismus und Masochismus*, her translation, in 1903, of Emile Laurent's study. Though Marie Madeleine had surely heard of Dolorosa, it is unclear to what extent they may have known each other. If it is true that Marie Madeleine was also involved with the cabaret 'Zum hungrigen Pegasus', then it is likely that the two poets were indeed acquainted.

Though widely read, the extent of *Auf Kypros*'s influence on other poets of the day was not necessarily profound. George Sylvester Viereck, the young German-American poet mentioned earlier, certainly imitated its styles and themes. Viereck

<sup>32</sup> See entry on Dolorosa in Budke and Schulze, *Schriftstellerinnen in Berlin*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>33</sup> Anon., 'Dolorosa' in *Der Welt Spiegel*, 28 November 1901.

was a great admirer of Madeleine and even claimed that ‘upon her forehead gleams the diadem of song. In her voluptuous, rhythmic and wonderfully passionate poems she approaches Swinburne himself’.<sup>34</sup> Like many others, Viereck was most impressed by *Auf Kypros* but disappointed with much of what came after: ‘her first sonorous utterance was followed by imbecile and frivolous verse, and mediocre fiction’ (p. 140).

It is also possible that the young Edith Södergran, who would later become one of Sweden’s greatest modern poets, was inspired by Madeleine’s early writing. Södergran’s earliest poetry, written in German when she was teenager at a German-language school, exhibits a similar mixture of Heine, eroticism and decadent oblivion. It was written in the wake of *Auf Kypros*’s publication but this may be nothing more than a coincidence. Though this would seem to be the extent of Marie Madeleine’s possible influence on other writers, there is evidence that the young Marie Madeleine became a sort of cult figure for many young Germans. As the author Fedor von Zobeltitz wrote, ‘So wurde Marie Madeleine entdeckt und von hysterischen Frauenzimmern und grünen Jungen vergöttert [...]’.<sup>35</sup> To what extent this is true may never be clear, but the general hysteria surrounding publication of *Auf Kypros* is unquestionable.

### Condemnation

Intellectuals ceased to take much interest in Marie Madeleine after the first decade or so of the twentieth century, though some, like Mühsam, continued to ponder her years later. The enormous appeal of *Auf Kypros* gradually faded, and amidst the increasing, if still erratic openness regarding sexuality, the world became more blasé as well. As Dr. Ike Spier wrote for the journal *Sexual-Probleme* in 1909: ‘Marie Madeleine ist sattem bekannt, und ich möchte keinem raten, nach ihren poetischen Visionen die nüchterne Welt zu messen, sonst könnte er aus seinen Träumen von Liebesglut und unerhörten Genüssen unsanft gerissen werden.’<sup>36</sup> While some liberal newspapers continued to churn out strangely positive reviews of her books, Madeleine also became a favourite target of literary scholars of the moralistic and chauvinistic breed, who were appalled at society’s increasing openness. Though, as we have seen, a great many reviewers were admirably open-minded regarding the unusual phenomenon of Marie Madeleine, moralistic criticism was also apparent

<sup>34</sup> Viereck, *Confessions of a Barbarian*, p. 139.

<sup>35</sup> Fedor von Zobeltitz, *Chronik der Gesellschaft unter dem letzten Kaiserreich*, vol. 2. Hamburg: Alster-Verlag, 1922, p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Ike Spier, ‘Der deletäre Nimbus der Prostitution’, pp. 843-53 in *Sexual Probleme. Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft und Sexualpolitik*, November 1909, p. 847.

early on. Clumsily attempting to put a sophisticated veneer on its moral objection, the *Neue deutsche Rundschau*, for instance, published a short commentary on *Auf Kypros*, which starts out by ironising the book's supposed tendency to awaken more interest in the author than in the poetry itself. Though acknowledging Madeleine's 'Virtuosität', even reluctantly hailing her as the first 'demi-vierge' to emerge 'selbstschöpferisch' on the world literary scene, the respected journal states that 'die reine Sinnlichkeit ist ja leider etwas unproduktiv', particularly when young women attempt to put it in print.<sup>37</sup> With unsurprising chauvinism but astounding naivité, the commentator states that, on the other hand, 'wenn ein Mann in Versen von seinen Erfolgen berichtet, so sind das Siegesgespräche, wie recht, billig und natürlich [...] Das ist in der Ordnung' (ibid.). Ilse Eckart, meanwhile, expressed her moral outrage at *Auf Kypros* and *Die drei Nächte* in great depth, ultimately branding such female erotic openness as 'eine Verklärung des Dirnentums.'<sup>38</sup> Albert Soergel, in *Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit* (1911), simply called her work 'schamlose Lyrik' and 'geile, wüste, überhitzte Pubertätserotik'.<sup>39</sup> The British Germanist Jethro Bithell, in *Modern German Literature* (1939) later dismissed it as 'a lurid confession of female perversion'.<sup>40</sup> He went on to praise the similarly decadent, male writers of the Vienna Secession because, as he says, 'they are great poets and personally decent [...] the dissection of diseased feelings and experiences is transmuted to literature of the first quality' (p. 237). In later volumes of both Soergel and Bithell's reference works, which were canonical in their day, there are no curt dismissals on moral grounds of Marie Madeleine's work; her name is simply absent altogether.

The anti-Semite Adolf Bartels, meanwhile, criticised Marie Madeleine on several occasions, but the most interesting moment is when he seems to be referring to her without mentioning her name:

Die Zahl der sozusagen auf dem linken Flügel der Literatur stehenden Frauen ist verhältnismäßig groß, charakteristischer Weise sind es überwiegend 'Jüdinnen'. Nur andeutungsweise will ich von der 'Brunstlyrik' einer Anzahl sich hier anschließender jüngerer weiblicher Talente reden, ohne auch nur einen Namen zu nennen.<sup>41</sup>

Bartels is almost certainly referring to Dolorosa, Marie Madeleine and possibly Else Lasker-Schüler as well. These were the only female authors of the day who wrote what qualified in any way as 'Brunstlyrik' and who may have had, or who may have been thought to have had, Jewish descent (only in the case of Else Lasker-Schüler is Jewish heritage a certainty). That Bartels would call Marie Madeleine or Dolorosa

<sup>37</sup> 'E—r', 'Im Theater lief...', pp. 671-2 in *Neue deutsche Rundschau*, vol. 9, 1900, p. 672.

<sup>38</sup> Eckart, 'Die "Ehrlichkeit" des modernen Weibes', p. 202.

<sup>39</sup> Albert Soergel, *Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit*. Leipzig: R. Voigtländer Verlag, 1916, p. 300.

<sup>40</sup> Jethro Bithell, *Modern German Literature 1880-1930*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1939, p. 237.

Jews is not particularly interesting since he also doggedly insisted that Thomas Mann was a Jew<sup>42</sup> – indeed, Bartels was likely to consider anyone he disapproved of to be a Jew. What is remarkable is that Bartels puts ‘Jüdinnen’ in quotation marks, as if indicating that the Jewishness of Madeleine and Dolorosa might have been a subject of speculation in the general public.

### **Editions and Performances**

With good reason, it seems that Marie Madeleine’s readership gave up hope that she would develop into a masterful writer. But people continued to buy her books for light, humorous, piquant reading and perhaps for the mere kick of having the latest from the infamous Marie Madeleine. As Delia von Puttkamer, the widow of Marie Madeleine’s son, confirms: everybody who was anybody was reading Marie Madeleine; even those who scorned her read her anyway. Many of her books reached a surprising number of editions. For example, *Die Kleider der Herzogin* (1906), a short and undeniably silly novella that chronicles a Belgian duchess’s infidelity – from the point of view of her personified clothes – became a genuine best-seller, reaching thirty editions. It was last printed in 1931, twenty-five years after its first printing: an unusual feat for turn-of-the-century popular fiction.

Meanwhile, in 1911, Est-Est publishing house in Berlin went so far as to issue a limited collector’s edition of *Auf Kypros*, full of pictures by some of the finest German artists of the day, including Lovis Corinth, Max Slevogt, Max Liebermann and Thomas Theodor Heine. Many of these pictures seem to have been created explicitly for the edition, which is now appreciated by book collectors. It is also worth noting at this point, that, although Marie Madeleine’s books were not usually illustrated, they were often decorated with art nouveau patterns, and the cover pictures were often created by the erotic artist Franz von Bayros.

Marie Madeleine also wrote four plays, but there is little information regarding performances. The aforementioned *Das bißchen Liebe*, which is the only Marie Madeleine play of any literary value, was staged in October 1905 at Nuremberg’s ‘Intimes Theater’. Michaela Giesing, a scholar of theatre – and one of the few contemporary scholars to mention Marie Madeleine – indicates that Madeleine was celebrated as a ‘weiblicher Wedekind’<sup>43</sup> but that, with this particular play, she in fact

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<sup>41</sup> Adolf Bartels, *Die deutsche Dichtung der Gegenwart*. Leipzig: Eduard Avenarius, 1907, p. 298.

<sup>42</sup> See Hermann Kurzke, *Thomas Mann. Das Leben als Kunstwerk*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, p. 212.

<sup>43</sup> Michaela Giesing, ‘Theater als verweigerter Raum’, pp. 240-59 in Hiltrud Gnüg and Renate Möhrmann, *Frauen • Literatur • Geschichte*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998, p. 258. Giesing seems to be referring to the designation given to Marie Madeleine by Theodor Hampe in *Das literarische Echo*, vol. 9, no. 16, 15 May 1907, p. 1263.

became something of an anti-Wedekind. Referring to Sascha, the Russian protagonist of *Das bißchen Liebe*, Giesing writes:

Eine andere Lulu, führt diese Sascha ihre Selbstbehauptung nicht nur gegen die Zumutungen der sie begehrenden Männer, welche die Unerreichbare idealisieren [...] und bei Mißlingen sich töten oder sie, vergeblich, töten wollen, sondern genauso gegen eine 'von Männern beherrschte Literatur', in welcher 'die Frau entweder etwas unglaublich Gutes und Edles oder [...] ganz las-ter-haft und dä-mo-nisch.' (p. 258)

The public, however, seems to have been less than impressed with the play, which was performed a mere four times. A reviewer for 'Das literarische Echo' lambasted both the play and the performance, though he acknowledged Madeleine's 'vortrefflichen Dialog' and indicated that her talent was better suited to novels.<sup>44</sup> All the same, the local newspaper, the *Fränkischer Courir*, wrote that it was a play, 'das bezaubert durch seine Poesie, das anregt durch die Originalität der Gedanken.'<sup>45</sup> A year and half later, the 'Intimes Theater' even decided to give Marie Madeleine another shot. In March 1907, it performed her *Katzen*, a reworking of her first play *Die drei Nächte*. But like *Das bißchen Liebe*, it was performed a total of only four times, never to be performed again, and was equally lambasted by *Das literarische Echo*: 'Von tieferem dramatischen Leben ist auch hier wenig zu spüren, und so blieb der Verfasserin [...] ein Erfolg als Dramatikerin abermals versagt, ihre "Katzen" mußten nach wenigen Aufführungen wieder vom Repertoire verschwinden'.<sup>46</sup> This, however, did not prevent the *Hoftheater* in Stuttgart from staging a few performances of an even less impressive play by Marie Madeleine, *Die Kusine*, in October 1908. Written in drab verse, *Die Kusine* is a soap opera of German colonists in West Africa, which even fails to play on the explosive cultural and racial themes that the setting offers. Again, it was only performed a few times. It seems that Madeleine's plays, similar to many of her novellas, served mostly as a brief, piquant distraction for relatively unsophisticated, provincial audiences.

Regarding Marie Madeleine's first play, *Die drei Nächte*, it originally appeared in book form only – for an unimpressed readership – before being reworked into *Katzen*. But this was not its sole fate. On 11 December 1925, Else Eckersberg, Curt Bois and Wilhelm Bendow, who called themselves 'Die drei Losgelassenen', performed a 'Nachtprobe' in Berlin's 'Komödie', which met with such success that it was repeated the following weekend and performed numerous times thereafter. As

<sup>44</sup> Theodor Hampe, 'Echo der Bühnen: Nürnberg', pp. 359-61 in *Das literarische Echo*, vol. 8, no. 5, 1 December 1905, p. 360.

<sup>45</sup> See 'Stimmen zu Büchern von Marie-Madeleine' in Marie Madeleine's *...und muß Abschied nehmen*. Leipzig: Franz Moeser, 1915 (final unnumbered pages).

<sup>46</sup> Theodor Hampe, 'Echo der Bühnen: Nürnberg', pp. 1262-4 in *Das literarische Echo*, vol. 9, no. 16, 15 May 1907, p. 1263.



the *Berliner Morgenpost* stated: ‘Das Theaterchen der “Komödie” wackelte um die Geisterstunde vor dem fröhlichen Gelächter eines Publikums, das vor allem die dankbarsten Hörer: die Schauspielerkollegen der drei Anstifter, in reicher Auswahl der beliebtesten Berliner Exemplare aufwies’.<sup>47</sup> In fact, ‘Die drei Losgelassenen’ had done nothing other than stage Marie Madeleine’s *Die drei Nächte*, with a number of humorous supplements of their own. They worked dance and music into the performance, wore extravagant clothes and spoke in comical accents. They also did improvisation and topped things off by pretending it was all a rehearsal. Of course, like most of Marie Madeleine’s plays and prose works, *Die drei Nächte* is comical and ironic and was obviously not intended to be taken too seriously. On the other hand, it is not complete slapstick and certain passages of the play that can be regarded as humorous are probably unintentionally so and demonstrate nothing more than the young Madeleine’s lack of subtlety. It is therefore unclear whether we should regard the acclaimed performance at the ‘Komödie’ as an acceptable interpretation of Marie Madeleine’s play or as a satire of an imperfect work. Newspapers and critics of the period tended to regard it as the latter. The *Berliner Morgenblatt* reported, ‘man mimte natürlich nur eine übermütige Parodie der schwülen Liebesexaltationen dieser aphrodisischen Dichterin [...]’.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, the poet and critic Max Herrmann-Neiße, who seems to have been unaware that the original *Die drei Nächte* had any sense of humour at all, wrote that the idea of *Die drei Losgelassenen* was ‘ergiebig und im besten Sinne kabarettistisch [...]: ein ernstgemeintes Stück der Marie Madeleine zu veralbern durch betont altväterische Kitschaufmachung, Phrasenpathos und Gestenschmalz [...]’.<sup>49</sup> And yet it is quite possible, perhaps even likely, that Marie Madeleine would have wholly approved of the humour and excitement at the ‘Komödie’. As we already know, Madeleine recited her poems for the premiere of Berlin’s first cabaret and her prose often features scenes in cabarets. She may have regarded the slapstick, cabaret performance as nothing more than the logical limit of her already humorous play.

### Post-War Reception

Since World War II, references to Marie Madeleine have been few and far between. Yet by post-war and particularly post-sixties standards, all the controversy that surrounded the mildly erotic content of Madeleine’s poems seems ridiculous. Though the erotic aspect of Madeleine’s *Auf Kypros* has lost little of its appeal, it has

<sup>47</sup> M.O., ‘Theater, Kunst Wissenschaft: Die drei Losgelassenen’ in *Berliner Morgenpost*, 13 December 1925.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*



lost its ability to shock. Meanwhile, contemporary scholars have come to accept that popular fiction is often just as worthy of study as so-called 'high' literature. What, then, should stop scholars in these more liberal times from rediscovering Marie Madeleine and integrating some of her texts into their scholarship?

We must first consider that Madeleine's plunge into obscurity was deep. Most of her books were out of print by the 1930s and we can speculate that many of them were burnt during this time as 'entartete Kunst' by the Nazis. At any rate, few major libraries in Germany have more than a couple of her books, if any, which is telling, since many of her books remained in print for years. Also, Marie Madeleine had little contact with other writers and was not involved in any literary circles. Later in life, she faded away into obscurity and seems to have had little contact with anyone at all, even with her closest family members. Thus her name is rarely mentioned in the context of other people, so that there are few ways in which the general public could chance upon her.

Some of the more thorough, post-war, German literary encyclopaedias mention Marie Madeleine, but never in any detail. A bibliography and paragraph-long biography usually marks the extent of the entry. And as a rule, it is only in such reference works that Marie Madeleine is remembered at all. Nonetheless, there have been a few exceptions to this rule. One was the publication, in 1977, of a collection of Madeleine's poetry, along with a selection of her prose, by a certain Sibylle Kaldewey. The collection is titled *Die rote Rose Leidenschaft*; it is named after a collection of poetry that Marie Madeleine herself published in 1912. The publication of this collection seems to have come from out of nowhere; in the 1970s there was less interest in Marie Madeleine than ever. The collection itself is a strange piece of work and a mixed blessing. Kaldewey includes Alfred Kind's essay on Marie Madeleine and a few newspaper reviews, but she otherwise provides no introduction, commentary or information on Marie Madeleine or her work. Instead, photographs and illustrations from the turn of the century are spaced between the poems. A photograph of Marie Madeleine, the same one from the original *Die rote Rose Leidenschaft*, is also provided at the beginning. On a very mysterious note, short works by two other decadent, *fin-de-siecle* authors, Alfred Jarry and Oskar Panizza, are included at the end of the book. When it comes to the works by Marie Madeleine, Kaldewey's process of selection is also a mystery. The poems and particularly the prose works included are by no means Marie Madeleine's most interesting. In fact, they seem to have been chosen at random from just a few books, perhaps the only

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<sup>49</sup> Hermann-Neiße, *Kabarett*, pp. 209-10.

books the editor was able to find. The selections are also poorly cited. The editor does not indicate from which collection each piece originates. She does, however, list the books she has used, misleadingly designating them as the 'Hauptwerke'.<sup>50</sup> It is no surprise that Kaldewey's compilation met with little success; but then again, the series in which Matthes & Seitz published it, titled 'Kultur-Kuriosa' or 'KuKu' for short, does not even seem to take itself seriously. Not that Marie Madeleine herself was the most serious of people, but the work of any author deserves to look its best.

On a more positive note, a few of Marie Madeleine's poems were actually put on a record album in the early 1980s. Boy Gobert, a gay and stereotypically affected German actor, recited several poems from Madeleine's *In Seligkeit und Sünden* (1905) for a recording by Deutsche Grammophon. Some of the poems were shortened, though not disadvantageously, and piano music by Benjamin Godard and Niels Gade is spaced between them and sometimes serves as an accompaniment. Boy Gobert does an excellent job of bringing out the poems' peculiar blend of serious romance and ironic kitsch. A male voice is also quite appropriate, as the poems of *In Seligkeit und Sünden* are intended to evoke a man's erotic adventures.

Unfortunately, the most recent attempt to disseminate Marie Madeleine's work has once again been rather disadvantageous for the future of Marie Madeleine's reception and has moreover come as a great surprise to the Puttkamer family. The roots of this phenomenon are in a book called *Sex Variant Women in Literature*, published by Jeanette H. Foster in 1958. It is a survey of lesbians in literature from the ancient to the modern world. The author chanced upon Marie Madeleine's *Auf Kypros*, which, like the best of decadent writing, includes some homosexual eroticism. Foster provides English translations of the poems in question, as well as a fragment of information regarding Marie Madeleine. She does not comment much on the poems themselves.

Decades later, an American, lesbian literary theorist by the name of Lillian Faderman came across the same poems by Marie Madeleine, perhaps in Foster's survey. However, her own way of dealing them, in her own anthology of lesbian literature from 1994, *Chloe plus Olivia*, is considerably less neutral. In fact, Faderman's commentary is hardly less belittling than that of the great chauvinists mentioned earlier, Soergel and Bithell. 'Marie Madeleine,' she comments disapprovingly, 'has the distinction of being the first woman poet who depicted lesbianism through "carnivorous flower" imagery'.<sup>51</sup> She considers Marie

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<sup>50</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die rote Rose Leidenschaft* (ed. by Sibylle Kaldewey), p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Lillian Faderman. *Chloe plus Olivia. An Anthology of Lesbian Literature from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*. New York: Penguin, 1994, p. 363.

Madeleine's lesbians to be nothing more than Baudelaire's *femmes damnées* and goes on to conjecture that Marie Madeleine herself might not have disagreed with Bithell's puritanical dismissal of her work.

Of course, it would be easy enough to dismiss Lillian Faderman's commentary for the simple reason that it takes just a few poems, all of them from *Auf Kypros*, into consideration. But even Faderman herself admits that lesbianism is not a central theme of *Auf Kypros*. The same can be said for all other works by Marie Madeleine, in which lesbian fantasies are very rare. The several lesbian poems in *Auf Kypros* are an intriguing anomaly. It would therefore be quite limiting to consider Marie Madeleine's literature in a purely lesbian context. But there is something else that is more disturbing about Faderman's standpoint and that deserves mention; it provides us with a further explanation as to why current scholarship continues to neglect Marie Madeleine. The implication of Faderman's commentary is that Marie Madeleine was probably nothing more than a self-loathing female, conquered by the apparently male, decadent aesthetics of her time. It seems that Faderman is in agreement with Albert Soergel, who asks, 'denn was ist diese sogenannte "weibliche" Lyrik anders, als eine böse, schamlosen Männern abgeguckte Manier?'.<sup>52</sup> In today's world, of course, the erotic content of Marie Madeleine's poems seems restrained; few people would feel inclined to call it *böse* or *schamlos*. But the existence of a female artist who celebrates any degree of sexual 'depravity' remains troubling in our society. It undermines currently prevailing notions of femininity, held by feminists and non-feminists alike, as much as it undermined the notions of femininity in Marie Madeleine's age. Most scholars, past and present as well as male and female, have regarded the piquant mingling of eroticism and sinister darkness as a product of male fantasy, as something that only men want to create and that only men can savour. As far as recent scholarship of decadent art and literature goes, this assumption is evident in such ideologically conflicting works as Bram Dijkstra's feminist *Idols of Perversity* (1986) and Camille Paglia's libertine *Sexual Personae* (1990). The idea that a female writer could take part in the decadent revelry, indeed that she could inventively contribute to it, is obviously something that scholars have not quite been ready for.

Despite such setbacks, we may finally be approaching the right milieu for a re-examination of Marie Madeleine's texts. In the past decade, interest in the *fin-de-siècle* has been expanding and many scholars have taken it upon themselves to look into some of the forgotten literary icons of this epoch. A particular interest in female

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<sup>52</sup> Soergel, *Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit*, p. 314.

authors of the turn of the century has also been sparked and Germanists are now often well aware of Marie Madeleine's existence, even if they normally have not read more than a few of her poems.

## **CHAPTER 2: FROM PAGAN TO MULTIRACIAL SENSUALITY: YOUTHFUL DAYDREAMS OF CYPRUS**

*Auf Kypros* is by far Marie Madeleine's most enjoyable work and the only one that deserves to be on any basic reading list of turn-of-the-century German literature. Here, Madeleine's language and imagery flow with a luxurious ease that she would never quite replicate in any later book of poetry or prose. Indeed, in her first two publications, *Auf Kypros* and the play *Die drei Nächte*, we witness Madeleine's early transition from natural brilliance to contrived burlesque. The fascination with variety and idolatry, which manifests itself in the dream-like and pagan atmospheres in her earliest poetry would later – in Madeleine's novellas, plays and short stories of society – find its chief outlet in issues of race. To gain a better understanding of Madeleine's fascination with race would be reason enough to explore her earliest writing first. Yet such an exploration is desirable in and of itself, considering the fact that it has not been done since the turn of the twentieth century and even then only in short articles. Thus, there are still a myriad of angles from which we could examine this work. Since it is hoped that in the future, scholars will pay more attention to *Auf Kypros*, the following exploration, addressing themes most relevant to the culture of turn-of-the-century Germany, should be regarded as a mere introduction to Madeleine's first publication.

### **The Fascination of Adolescence and Sexuality**

Young artists abounded in the German-speaking world at the turn of the century. Many of the great authors of modern, German literature, from Thomas Mann in Germany to Robert Musil and Hugo von Hofmannsthal in Austria, were in their first youth, and already making names for themselves. This was also the dawn of the Munich, Berlin and Vienna Secessions and of *Jugendstil* and Expressionism. Old aesthetics were being scrapped for experimental styles and a potent atmosphere of decay and regeneration was in the air. While some artists developed styles that were utterly unprecedented, others looked nostalgically into the past and added new, audacious twists on Romanticism and Classicism. Often, youth was the one thing these artists had in common, whether they were experimental agitators or languishing decadents. Youth, in fact, had become something of a by-word for turn-of-the-century Germany and Austria. One of the leading voices of the new style was the Munich journal *Die Jugend*, which later lent its name to the term *Jugendstil*. Thus,

while most of Western Europe associates this ubiquitous decorative style with newness, as in the term 'art nouveau', Germany and Austria have tended to associate it more specifically with youth.

The German-speaking world's fascination with youth was also apparent in everything from the *Jugendbewegung* to the upsurge in the popularity of *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, and young and famous writers, such as Frank Wedekind, Lou Andreas-Salomé or Robert Musil, took up the new theme of adolescence in their writing. Indeed, this era marked the establishment of *Adoleszenztheorie*, with scholars such as Ellen Key and Siegfried Bernfeld conducting research into what previously had not been considered a particularly important phase of human life. Such research was made possible by the increasing scholarly openness regarding the human mind and body, which also allowed for the first scientific research into human sexuality, a topic that was still taboo in public. In Vienna, Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Sigmund Freud developed theories that would put human sexuality at the forefront of psychological and cultural issues, and in Berlin, Magnus Hirschfeld followed suite with his unprecedented and liberating research into homosexuality.

Meanwhile, with Europe's patriarchal order under threat by women's movements, society had also developed a pejorative fixation on women's bodies and women's sexuality in particular. Of the turn of the century, Elfriede Wiltchnigg writes, 'Die medizinische Forschung war bereits in den Jahrzehnten davor mit der Aufdeckung der 'Geheimnisse' des weiblichen Körpers befaßt; mit der Psychoanalyse erfolgte der Versuch, nun auch den 'Rätseln der weiblichen Seele' auf die Spur zu kommen'.<sup>1</sup> This research was often an absurd admixture of science and art and of fact and fiction, with art and fiction often prevailing, sometimes to a dangerous extent. But this approach characterised many areas of research at the turn of the century, which, after all, was the age of Ernst Mach, a physicist with an interest in psychology and art, who saw no boundaries between his three interests. As is well known, his 'Analyse der Empfindungen' (1886), which proposed that the ego is nothing more than an agglomeration of sensations, had a profound effect on Viennese Modernism. This was also an age in which anthropology and art appreciation were often indistinguishable, when human bodies and human race were appropriate as zoological displays or newspaper decorations, while beauty, in

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<sup>1</sup> See Elfriede Wiltchnigg, "'Süße Mädel" und "femme fatales" – Das Bild der Frau in Wien um 1900' in *Newsletter Moderne*, vol. 2, no. 2, September 1999, <http://www-gewi.kfunigraz.ac.at/moderne/dok.htm>.



particular female beauty, was a suitable topic for medical publications. In short, German culture at the turn of the century had an unprecedented fascination with youth, a depreciative fixation on the female body and psyche, and a barely repressed obsession with sexuality.

This was the milieu of the year 1900, when Marie Madeleine's *Auf Kypros* was published. It was a decade after Wedekind wrote his play *Frühlings Erwachen* (1890-91), a vivid depiction of sexual awakening, and seven years after Max Halbe published his play *Jugend* (1893), of which Jethro Bithell confirms: 'What was new in the play was the psychology of adolescence'.<sup>2</sup> It was six years before the anonymous publication of *Josefine Mutzenbacher* (1906), a sexually explicit *Bildungsroman* of a Viennese child-prostitute, which would cause a mini-sensation.

*Auf Kypros* is a book of poetry with a mildly erotic content, written by an adolescent girl. Like the later *Josefine Mutzenbacher*, it has the magic combination of puberty, sexuality and femininity, which was sure to attract the attention of turn-of-the-century German-speaking audiences. But it was neither pornographic, like *Josefine Mutzenbacher*, nor social commentary like *Frühlings Erwachen* or *Die Jugend*. What distinguished *Auf Kypros* from these books was that it was an authentic document of adolescence. Indeed, in this era of blurred boundaries between art and science, a book of erotic poetry by an adolescent girl was no less a work of art than a piece of scientific evidence, an artefact of female puberty. Ultimately, this was the only worth some critics came to see in *Auf Kypros*. At the time of its publication, however, some found the poems so artistic and stimulating that, as we have seen, they called Marie Madeleine's youth into question.

Even as a very young woman, Marie Madeleine was a dandy who regarded herself as a work of art. She was undoubtedly aware of the authentically pubescent appeal of her first poems. Two years after its publication, when Marie Madeleine humbly designated *Auf Kypros* 'Die Lyrik der Pubertät', she may have been fending off both moral condemnation and unwanted feminist attention but she was also confirming her original objective, which was to present her adolescence to the world as a work of art. This was the genius of the young Marie Madeleine. Although in the midst of adolescence, she was able to see this phase of her life from an aesthetic perspective, from the perspective of an artist who is many years older and reminisces about the sweltering ambience of adolescence. The young Marie Madeleine intuited

Ernst Mach's supposition in *Analyse der Empfindung*, that the ego is subordinate to sensations, which intermingle with one another to form an ambience, and she applied the uninhibited creative force of her youth to harness the ambience of burgeoning adolescence. She did not squander this force in an effort to transcend it, as other young artists tend to do, with their grim intention to be taken seriously.

Of course, the very solemnity of adolescence is one of the things Marie Madeleine captures so effectively in *Auf Kypros*. The narrators of her poems are often young people who appear old and tired because they are in the midst of the fatiguing, epic journey of sexual awakening. We can take for example an untitled *Auf Kypros* poem that begins as follows:

Ueber meiner Jugend  
lastet so schwüle Glut.  
Ich bin so müde. Ich sehe  
niemals die Sonnenflut.

Ich bin so müde. Ich höre,  
ich höre zu jeder Zeit  
schluchzende Stimmen. Die singen  
das alte Lied vom Leid.

Allüberall nur Sterben,  
Brunst und Lüge und Not.<sup>3</sup>

Through new experiences in the world at large and within the body and mind, the adolescent comes to terms with the sexual aspect of human existence. Childhood is ethereal; prepubescent boys or girls have yet to truly taste of the murkiness of reproduction and decay, of 'Sterben, Brunst, Lüge und Not'. Marie Madeleine conveys this overwhelming new ambience of adolescence with a dull redness:

Die schauernde Welt überflutet  
und erstickt von trübem Rot.

Aber die Sünde, die Sünde  
tanzt ihren Siegestanz.  
Die weissen Hüften umflutet  
des Mantels Purpurglanz.

Ein roter Herrschermantel,  
und er leuchtet wie dunkles Blut. — — — (p. 37-8)

The imagery is of unprecedented audacity. Redness floods around white hips like a royal cape that shines like dark blood, heralding both shameful lust and a peculiar sense of power. Perhaps it is redness of menstrual blood, venerated in pagan religions

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<sup>2</sup> Jethro Bithell. *Modern German Literature 1880 -1930*, p. 55.

but tabooed in contemporary Western culture. Marie Madeleine conveys the eerie splendour of menstrual blood's primeval associations as well as the alarm, despair and fatigue it brings to a young girl, particularly amidst the sexual repression of turn-of-the-century Europe. It almost seems as if this red blood flows throughout *Auf Kypros*. Sultry redness is present in many of the poems as is the use of blood as a modifier for redness. Such pagan images are frequent in *Auf Kypros* and provide a fertile basis on which to explore the rest of the poetry collection.

### **Sensual Pagan-Christian Symbols**

Among turn-of-the-century Europe's many new interests was alternative religion, either drawing on eastern traditions – from Buddhism and Hinduism – or on Europe's own pre-Christian, polytheistic past. The first Germans to break ground for the latter phenomenon were Wagner, with his operatic romanticisation of Teutonic mythology, and his erstwhile admirer Nietzsche, who never tired of promoting the bold *joie de vivre* and healthy amorality of the pagan Classical world at the expense of his favourite object of ridicule, Christianity. By 1900 there were numerous pagan cults operating in Germany, generally using Teutonic mythology as a background for their often pro-German, chauvinist ideology. The neo-paganism of the poet Stefan George, the guru Ludwig Klages and their Munich circle – so aptly satirised in Franziska von Reventlow's *Herrn Dames Aufzeichnungen* (1913) – was just one of many such phenomena in Germany at this time. Neo-paganism was also flourishing in other European countries, particularly France, where there was even a new cult of Isis.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the greatest literary exponent of paganism was the French erotic novelist Pierre Louÿs, whose first novel *Aphrodite. Mœurs antiques* (1896) seems to have been read and appreciated by the young Marie Madeleine. Such French harbingers of decadence as Baudelaire and Joris-Karl Huysmans also initiated a new aesthetic-romantic interest in Catholicism, emphasising the iconic, semi-pagan aspects of the religion, something which intoxicated decadents throughout Europe,<sup>5</sup> including Marie Madeleine. Throughout her early work, we encounter pagan or paganised Christian personae and motifs – from pagan priestesses, to Magdalene and Christ figures, to Classical and mythological landscapes.

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<sup>3</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Auf Kypros*. Berlin: Vita, 1902, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> See Frederic Lees, 'Heidentum in Paris' in *Der Welt Spiegel*, 14 October 1906.

<sup>5</sup> For further reading on this subject see Ellis Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1997.

### **Aphrodite: Promiscuous Desire as Religion**

*Auf Kypros* may be a bittersweet exaltation of sexual awakening but it is also a homage to longing, an emotion that is as ageless as it is timeless. In an untitled poem, Madeleine writes:

Meine Wünsche sind wie die Wellen,  
die sich wälzen über die Lande,  
die gewaltig steigen und schwellen  
and dann müde verinnen im Sande. (p. 19)

It is probably no coincidence that the love goddess Aphrodite was born in the coastal sea foam, for no element of nature seems to express infinite, sexual longing more aptly than ocean waves. The title of Madeleine's first poetry collection is a reference to the marine birth of this goddess, who, according to Greek myth, rose out of the foam off the coast of the island of Cyprus. This birth was a celebrated image in turn of the century Europe and Marie Madeleine was most likely familiar with Lovis Corinth's lush and yet ironic painting of 1896, 'Geburt der Venus', which portrays a naked and unidealised adolescent girl rising from the sea (fig. 5). We can regard this painting as something of the visual equivalent of Madeleine's early poetic style, which is lush and serious and yet jarringly self-ironic at times. *Auf Kypros* is a beautiful yet unidealised portrayal of adolescence.

The first poem of *Auf Kypros* employs the motif of Aphrodite and, like many of the poems that follow, it is a fantasy of erotic fulfilment with fascinating pagan overtones. The narrator, imagining that she is a priestess of Aphrodite, fantasises about rousing the object of her desire, a man with a blond 'Fürstenhaupt', to nothing less than worship of her. The first stanza is a characteristically decadent fantasy of decorative objects and royal slaves:

Du sollst mir Brillantenringe schenken  
und grüne Smaragden und rote Rubinen.  
Du sollst mir zehntausend Sklaven schenken,  
die mich auf ihren Knien bedienen. (p. 1)

The evocation of diamonds, emeralds and rubies exemplifies the decadent fascination with variation and type, which will become particularly central to Madeleine's portrayal of race. Huysmans' *Des Esseintes* and Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, the two most famous decadent aesthetes in literature, are collectors of the various manifestations in appearance, scent, taste or feel, of exquisite objects, ranging from liquors and perfumes to carpets and plants. The dream of ten thousand slaves is a typically Marie Madeleine touch. It is a sly reversal of oriental despotism, with an insatiable,

matriarchal figure, a supreme *femme fatale*, rather than a patriarch, at the head of the legions of slaves. The following stanzas of 'Eine Priesterin der Aphrodite' carry on the fantasy of decoration. The language and imagery are of a religious, but unmistakably pre-Christian nature, which must have been quite shocking for Madeleine's Protestant, Prussian audience. As the third stanza proclaims:

Ich will soviel Schmuck und soviel Flimmer  
wie ein uralt heidnisches Götzenbild,  
aus dessen Augen ein dunkler Schimmer  
von seltsamen, grausamen Lastern quillt. (p. 2)

Subsequent poems, in which Christian imagery is used erotically, must have been even more shocking.

As 'Eine Priesterin der Aphrodite' continues, Madeleine introduces us to one of her favourite images, blossoms, which in this case evoke sacrificial male fertility:

Und weisse Blüten, des Stieles beraubt,  
sollen auf meinem Lager liegen,  
und dein Haupt, dein blondes Fürstenhaupt,  
soll sich zitternd vor mir zur Erde biegen (p. 2)

Another image that recurs in Marie Madeleine's poetry, the female panther, appears in the lines just after:

Und ich werde lachen mit leuchtenden Zähnen.  
Wie ein Panther, der sich voll Wollust reckt,  
wird sich mein Körper strecken und dehnen. (ibid.)

Madeleine is fond of likening sensual women to cats, particularly panthers, thus evoking Nietzsche's association, in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, of panthers and tigers with the realm of Dionysus.<sup>6</sup> She often baptises her brazen female characters *Pantherkätzchen*, as in the title of her semi-autobiographical novel. We can regard the black panther-woman as akin to the Russian *femme fatale* who haunts much of Marie Madeleine's prose. In both cases it is a powerful, often dark-haired and exotic female figure, much like the Magdalene figure and Marie Madeleine herself. In these two images, the passive male blossom and the aggressive female panther, we begin to sense the fantastical matriarchal world, governed by all-powerful, female sexuality, which characterises Madeleine's early texts.

As the poem reaches its climax, it exemplifies the audacity of Marie Madeleine's opulent imagery of adolescence. The narrator fantasises about ruling over the world's hordes of adolescent boys and girls, who are painfully becoming

<sup>6</sup> For instance, in the following passage: 'Mit Blumen und Kränzen ist der Wagen des Dionysus überschüttet: unter seinem Joche schreiten Panther und Tiger' (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie in Werke in drei Bänden*, vol. 1. Munich: Carl Hanser, 1993, p. 24).

aware of their sexuality. This must have been one of the most astounding passages for Madeleine's readership and it still seems bold today:

Ruf sie mir alle! Die blassen Knaben  
mit den düster gefalteten Brau'n,  
die niemals mit Augen gesehen haben,  
was sie in ihren Träumen erschauen.

Mit trotzigen Lippen, die nie genossen  
von der Küsse berauschendem Gifte,  
und scheuen Armen, die nie sich schlossen  
um eines Weibes schwellende Hüfte. --

Ruf mir die Mädchen, die ihre hageren  
Glieder dehnen in dumpfem Verlangen,  
wenn die Schatten der Nacht sie umlagern  
und ihre Sinne mit Sehnsucht umfassen.

Ruf mir die Mädchen, die schmerzvoll weinen,  
wenn im Frühling im sonnendurchglühten,  
die jungen Bäume zu brechen scheinen  
unter der schweren Last ihrer Blüten.

Ruf sie mir alle! -- Ich aber werde  
mich erheben vom üppigen Pfühle. (pp. 3-4)

The narrator then imagines herself speaking out to this frustrated mass of youth, encouraging them to give into their lust and pray to Aphrodite:

Wie eine Königin der Erde  
Werde ich sprechen in die Schwüle:

Ihr, die ihr hungert nach Genüssen;  
ihr, die ihr dürstet nach Zärtlichkeiten,  
nach Lippen, die eure Lippen küssen  
und über ihre Glieder gleiten;

Ihr, deren überquellende Kraft,  
deren Jugendkraft sich selber verzehrt,  
ihr, die dem Flehn eurer Leidenschaft  
in Träumen nur Erhörung gewährt, --

Lasst die Schmerzen, die euch durchglühen,  
die heimlichen Glut zu Flammen werden!  
betet im Staub auf euren Knieen:  
'Aphrodite! -- Herrin der Erden!' (pp. 4-5)

The final stanza becomes a general plea for erotic fulfilment:

Sündenträume in eurem Schweigen.  
Aufgethan eurer Sehnsucht Blüte! --  
Ferne verhallen die schluchzenden Geigen. --  
Gieb uns -- die Liebe, -- Aphrodite! (p. 5)



These last lines can be read, not without comical effect, as a sort of religious incantation.

The next poem of *Auf Kypros*, 'Sappho', is an equally grandiose sexual fantasy that involves hordes of adolescents. Here they are exclusively of the female gender, and the narrator fantasises about experiencing them sexually. As the second stanza entreats:

O kommt! O süsse Mädchenschar,  
ich will von deiner Schönheit trinken,  
und gieb dem Wind dein wildes Haar  
und lass die Hüllen lautlos sinken. (p. 6)

A further *Auf Kypros* poem, 'Vagabunden', which *Die Umschau* called 'die Perle' of *Auf Kypros*,<sup>7</sup> equally luxuriates in women. The narrator declares that, with her dark and weary eyes, she will lure her lover – probably a young girl – away from her 'Haus und Herd', and initiate her into the life of a vagabond. Together, they will experience the world's plethora of women, at least from a distance:

Wir werden immer weiter ziehn  
und andachtsvollen Sinnes lauschen  
den wilden Walzermelodie'n,  
und was die seid'nen Kleider rauschen,  
und was die Spitzenröcke flüstern,  
und was die süssen, wildgelockten,  
die langen Mädchenhaare knistern. (p. 124)

The phrase 'andachtsvollen Sinnes' reiterates the integration of sexuality into religious experience, one of the central aspects of *Auf Kypros*.

'Champagne frappé!', the first poem Madeleine published, conjures up a similar situation of sampling women. Here, the narrator likens cold and stoic women to champagne, as well as to 'Islands Gletscherspalten', and glorifies the experience of awakening the hidden heat of these women, the fizz or the flaming liquids within, and tasting of it. As the second and third stanzas espouse:

Willst Du so recht das Rechte fühlen,  
musst aus dem Eis du das Feuer geniessen: -  
Jene Frau'n, die die Heiligen spielen,  
musst du in deine Arme schliessen.

Glaub's! In den ruhig blickenden Weibern  
zucken die allerwildesten Triebe,  
und am tollsten lodert die Liebe  
in den weissen Madonnenleibern. (pp. 14-15)

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<sup>7</sup> Pollack, 'Neue Belletristik', p. 773.

One might contend that the poem is an adulation of lesbian experience, intended for other adolescent women. But one could also speculate that the poem is a ribald ‘tip’ for men, a piece of ‘inside information’, from a young woman who no longer sides with her own gender in the war of the sexes. Meanwhile, in likening apparently frigid women to golden champagne or to Iceland’s glacial crevices, Madeleine is already exhibiting the first inklings of her lifelong penchant for associating the human body and soul with objects, in particular with psychoactive drugs and exotic landscapes. As we will discover in later chapters, she associates women with wine, opium and morphine, while both men and women are often inextricably linked with particular landscapes, usually with racial overtones. In a later *Auf Kypros* poem the narrator tells her Teutonic lover the following: ‘Alle Nordlandklippen sind nicht so weiss \ wie deine leuchtende Schlankheit’ (p.25). She then goes on to say: ‘Deine bösen Augen scheinen \ zwei abgrundleuchtende Fjorde mir – –’ (p. 26). She later fantasises that he is a strong, young tree and that she is tropical flower that winds herself around him and drinks his marrow until he withers – an image that she will later employ in her portrayal of the mixed-race *femme fatale* Olga in the novella *Die indische Felsentaube*.

### **Mary Magdalene: Sexualised Christianity**

The dynamics of nineteenth-century Europe’s reception of the Magdalene figure – and of Marie Madeleine’s reception in particular – are of a surprising nature. The Bible, in fact, does not call Mary Magdalene’s chastity into question at all. It merely states that she was possessed by seven demons, which Christ exorcised from her. Magdalene’s licentious past and her less-than-chaste interest in Christ is a myth that developed over the ages, particularly around the turn of the century. As Susan Haskins attests:

The Mary Magdalene of the Orientalists, Decadents and other *fin-de-siècle* writers and artists took on an exotic, mystical and, sometimes, even sinister persona, in which the nature of the relationship between her and Christ was explored with a freedom characteristic of the age.<sup>8</sup>

An oriental, sexualised Mary Magdalene may have been popular because it lent a new gloss to the increasingly disrespected Christian religion by emphasising its exotic non-European roots and its pagan overtones. But Mary Magdalene, as well as other biblical and hence Near Eastern women, such as Salome or Herodias, were also

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<sup>8</sup> Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalene: Myth and Metaphor*. London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993, p. 352.

popular symbols of degeneration, since turn-of-the-century Europe regarded sexually powerful females as a symptom of societal decline. Thus, late nineteenth-century paintings of Mary Magdalene were often of a sexually degrading nature. A telling example is an etching by the Belgian painter Félicien Rops, which depicts, to use Haskins' words, 'the Magdalen masturbating below a cross upon which is nailed, not the body of Christ, but a large and haloed penis' (p. 358). Marie Madeleine dedicated *Auf Kypros* to the memory of this very Félicien Rops.

Madeleine's pen name may refer to the narrative voice or any number of figures in her poetry. Indeed, a second female icon who recurs in *Auf Kypros* is a Mary-Magdalene-like figure, who, rather than revelling in erotic adventure in a pre-Christian arcadia, seems to grovel in a post-Christian world of cruelty and sin. A recurrent theme in Marie Madeleine's poetry is also something that the Magdalene figure has come to embody in recent centuries: the melding of spirituality with animal sensuality.

The information in the Bible regarding Mary Magdalene points to a positive and central figure, in a purely spiritual context – she was the first to witness Christ's resurrection. Nonetheless, women's efforts to achieve immortality have been considerably more difficult than men's. The female is thought to be a 'fleshier' creature than the male and thus, as Beth Ann Bassein points out, she has had:

correspondingly more denying and destroying of her fleshly part to perform in order to reach her heavenly goal. She naturally developed extreme self-hatred, made supreme efforts to reclaim herself in the eyes of God, often secretly renounced all earthly ties including that of her husband, and lived an almost vacuous life except for religious ritual that she thought would help join her to God in death.<sup>9</sup>

We can speculate that Marie Madeleine's work is an attempt to overcome this phenomenon, for it affirms woman's spirituality as well as her 'fleshliness', which it regards as positive. In fact, sensuality never undermines spirituality in Marie Madeleine's world. As is often the case in decadent literature, the two concepts have a positive, mutually enhancing relationship. As Jean Pierrot states, 'la littérature et l'art décadents nous montrent souvent un mélange curieux et souvent profanatoire, de religion et d'érotisme'.<sup>10</sup> As an example, he cites an engraving of Mary Magdalene by Félicien Rops. Perhaps the affinity Marie Madeleine felt for this artist was rooted in their similar aspirations to meld religion and eroticism. This seems particularly

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<sup>9</sup> Beth Ann Bassein, *Women and Death: Linkages in Western Thought and Literature*. Westport, Conn. / London: Greenwood Press, 1984, p. 20.

evident when we consider Rops' painting 'The Temptation of Saint Anthony' from 1878, which depicts the saint tormented by a naked and lustful woman on a cross. This blasphemous image of a sexualised, crucified woman – a crucified Magdalene rather than a crucified Christ – recurs in *Auf Kypros*, albeit in a different context.

The poem 'Crucifixa', which remains one of the more daring and haunting poems in *Auf Kypros*, offers the spectacle of a pubescent female, crucified for her sexual sins, in which the narrator seems to have played no small part:

Ich sah an einem hohen Marterpfahle,  
an einem dunklen Kreuz dich festgebunden.  
Es glänzten meiner Küsse Sündenmale  
auf deinem weissen Leib wie Purpurwunden. (p. 39)

Thematically related to 'Champagne frappe', 'Crucifixa' portrays a female whose 'wilde Lüste' do not correspond to her ethereal exterior, which is in this case still childlike:

Wie hager deine jungen Glieder sind,  
wie unentwickelt knospenhaft die Brüste! - -  
In deinen Augen aber, blondes Kind,  
da glüht der Fackelbrand der wilden Lüste (ibid.)

Here, Marie Madeleine associates the chaste female body not with champagne, but with other objects of luxury:

Und warst du doch wie kühler, weisser Samt  
und fleckenlos wie ein geschliff'nes Schwert,  
als deine Kinderunschuld mich entflammt,  
als ich so schrankenlos dich hab' begehrt. (p. 40)

'Crucifixa' has been considered as one of Marie Madeleine's lesbian poems.

But it is also possible that, as in the *Auf Kypros* poem 'Greisenworte', which portrays an old man's lust for a young woman, Marie Madeleine is adopting the perspective of a man. Though the narrator is akin to the seductress with the dark and weary eyes in 'Vagabunden', he/she also exhibits traits of a common, decadent male type, something of a reckless and world-weary Don Juan and something of a vampire:

Ich gab dir von dem Gift, das in mir ist;  
ich gab dir meiner Leidenschaften Stärke,  
und nun, da du so ganz entlodert bist,  
graut meiner Seele vor dem eignen Werke.

Ich möchte knie'n vor einem der Altäre,  
die ich zerschlug in frevelhaftem Wagen, --  
Madonna mit den Augen der Hetäre,  
ich selber habe dich an's Kreuz geschlagen! (ibid.)

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<sup>10</sup> Jean Pierrot, *L'imaginaire décadent (1880–1900)*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1977, p. 114.

In what must have been another shock to her Prussian audience, the cross becomes symbolic of the burden of burgeoning, adolescent sexuality, which in this case has been stirred up into a storm by the presumably older narrator.

### A Synthesis of Lucifer and Christ

The blasphemy of 'Crucifixa' is paralleled in another *Auf Kypros* poem, 'Lucifer', by the sacrilegious intermingling of the Christ figure and Satan. Hans Land, editor of *Das neue Jahrhundert*, recognised Marie Madeleine's talent when it came to the evocation of dark, sinister beauty:

Sie sagt alles, diese Marie Madeleine, sie scheut vor nichts zurück. Es ist das Wesen ihrer Kunst, daß sie alles sagen kann, die schwärzesten Dinge, sie breitet die prachtvollen Purpurfalten ihrer Dichterschaft, und in Wohllaut und Sprachklang ertränkt, werden diese Dinge schön.<sup>11</sup>

The poem 'Lucifer' offers a good introduction to this darker side of Madeleine's work, in which the narrator seems to stand longingly on the threshold to oblivion. The poem begins with the rejection of daytime, which will later become a recurrent motif in Madeleine's morphine-related works:

Meine Augenlider sind immer so schwer,  
und meine Augen sind so müde.  
Ich hasse das Licht des Tages so sehr.  
Wann kommt mein Friede? (p. 47)

Here, Marie Madeleine establishes that the world of day, of life and activity under the eyes of God, is tiresome and hateful. This leads, in the next stanza, to the invocation of a demonic deity, a divine figure of darkness:

Wann kommt die Dämmerung über die Welt,  
und der Dämon der Nacht, der flügelschlagend  
mich zärtlich in seinen Armen hält,  
einen Stern auf dem Haupte tragend! (ibid.)

From the title of the poem and from the star on the deity's forehead, it is clear that the 'Dämon der Nacht' is Lucifer. But he is also akin to the god of sleep, the Greek Morpheus or the Roman Somnos, whom it would certainly be appropriate to invoke as a solution to 'schwere Augenlider' and 'müde Augen'. The next stanza adds still another facet to the demon:

Einen einzigen Stern, der mit mattem Glanz  
in vergifteter Blässe leuchtet.  
Mein Dämon trägt einen Dornenkranz,  
der die Stirn ihm mit blutigen Tropfen feuchtet (p. 48)

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<sup>11</sup> Hans Land, 'Auf Kypros', pp. 247-51 in *Das neue Jahrhundert*, 19 May 1900, p. 248.

With a crown of thorns, this bleeding deity, who brings 'Friede' and embraces the narrator 'zärtlich', now resembles Christ as well as Lucifer. It is safe to say that he is both figures at once. Just as Mary Magdalene embodies, in Western mythology, both saint and sinner, both chaste follower and fallen temptress of Christ, so does Christ himself, in Marie Madeleine's mythology, encompass both sex object and worshipped idol. In such poems, we can regard the narrator as something of a Magdalene figure, longing for her god and lover, a Christ-Lucifer figure. At the end of the poem at hand, the narrator beseeches, 'Lass mich vergehen in deinen Armen, \ mein Gott und Geliebter: Lucifer!' (ibid.).

With 'Lucifer', it becomes clear that, despite the affirmation and enjoyment of life that is apparent in so many of her poems, Marie Madeleine also has a preoccupation with oblivion and death. Like many decadents, Madeleine exhibited a pagan inclination to celebrate both life and death and both positive and negative human inclinations and emotions, which she perceived as equally beautiful. In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (1878), Nietzsche writes that 'die Griechen allen ihren Leidenschaften und bösen Naturhängen von Zeit zu Zeit gleichsam Feste gaben [...] es ist dies das eigentlich Heidnische ihrer Welt, vom Christentume aus nie begriffen [...]'.<sup>12</sup> Madeleine's work is often a celebration of life, but sometimes the realm of death seems to offer a welcome respite from the living world, when its glare gets too bright. As the tired narrator of one *Auf Kypros* poem proclaims after a love affair: 'Meine Augen sind müde vom rosigen Licht. \ Ich sah des roten Lichts zu viel' (p. 44).

As Wolfdietrich Rasch attests, images of decay in decadent literature feel redeeming because they offer liberation from the prejudice of a wholly positive perspective on growth and progress, a prejudice that Schopenhauer, one of the philosophical fathers of decadence, called into question.<sup>13</sup> We might similarly explain the redeeming quality of nightfall and the allure of a god, who is part Lucifer, part Christ and possibly part Morpheus. Though a nocturnal realm where a sensual, derelict deity reigns supreme was likely to be a disconcerting spectre for the majority of an absolutist, protestant Prussia, thriving on its military success and ever-prepared for a new battle, it was also likely to be a something of a relief. If the Prussian ideal is the god of day, who is chaste, responsible, hardworking and brutal, then a weary

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<sup>12</sup> Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* in *Werke in drei Bänden*, vol. 1. Munich: Carl Hanser, 1993, p. 820.



Marie Madeleine has created his soothing antithesis. In Marie Madeleine's later works, the nocturnal Christ from the underworld becomes a dead lover and often, it is the twilight realm revealed by morphine, which consoles the mourning Magdalene figure.

Rasch also mentions 'ein Wissen um Verlorenes' (p. 110) that is typical of decadent literature: 'ein melancholisches Bewußtsein, das sie in der Bejahung, im Akzeptieren der *Décadence* bestärkt' (ibid.). Decadents, he goes on to say, are caught up in mourning because they do not wish to deceive themselves about what they feel is the permanent loss of mankind's golden age. If we regard another poem from *Auf Kypros*, 'Vom Stamme Lucifers', we discover that the Magdalene figure and the Lucifer figure were once united in this golden age. 'Vom Stamme Lucifers' relates the story of two fallen angels. Losing their eagle wings and golden crowns, they drop into a world of mud and 'Alltagsinsekten', which is like a gruesome underworld, a hell, but also a bit like our own living world with its 'Alltagsmenschen'. The hour comes when the two fallen angels find themselves again:

und ihre Seelen erglühten  
in sehnsuchtswildem Verlangen,  
und selige Qualen erblühten  
als sie sich zitternd umschlangen  
und sich küssten auf den Mund. (p. 12)

The passion of the two fallen angels is characterised by the melding of sexuality and spirituality that is central to Madeleine's early work; the angels' souls are aglow and their pangs of desire are blessed. This holy, golden passion is all that is left from the age before the fall. It is otherwise non-existent in the earthly world where the angels have landed (the insects balk at the lovers' display of affection). Those who are 'vom Stamme Lucifers' are those who mourn the loss of the heavenly, golden age, the archetypal *Urfrühe*, as described by the Jungian Erich Neumann,<sup>14</sup> when sensuality and spirituality were one.

In many of her poems, Madeleine portrays a similar pair of young lovers who are singled out from humanity, branded with something like the mark of Cain. In the *Auf Kypros* poem 'Komm mit!', which is grouped with other poems under the heading 'Meinem Dämon', the narrator invites her lover to come with her to the land, 'wo das Herzeleid und die Sehnsucht wohnen [...]' (p. 107). As in 'Vom Stamme Lucifers', it seems that the lovers' infinite capacity for longing alienates them from

<sup>13</sup> Rasch, Wolfdietrich, *Die literarische Décadence um 1900*. München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1986, p. 29.

<sup>14</sup> Erich Neumann, *Ursprungsgeschichte des Bewußtseins*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1984, p. 20.

others. The fatigue of longing will also lead them to an early death. As the concluding lines of 'Komm mit' lament:

wir tragen beid' auf der Stirn das Zeichen  
von jenen, die in dem Lande wohnen,  
auf müden Häuptern die Dornenkronen,  
und sterben, eh' sie die Höh' erreichen! (p. 108)

In Marie Madeleine's subsequent poetry collection, *An der Liebe Narrenseil*, we reencounter the motif of the sign on the forehead in the poem 'Die Geschwister', in which a sister tells her younger brother that he is destined for the same tormented, adolescent longing that she has suffered from – something which Madeleine attributes to Slavic blood. Even twenty years after *Auf Kypros*, in the unimpressive poetry collection *Taumel* (1920), Madeleine's preoccupation with a decadent pair of lovers or siblings has not subsided. In the poem 'Das Marterholz' – as in 'Komm mit' and 'Die Geschwister' – the couple are marked apart with an actual sign or seal as a decadent race that suffers from love and longing. And as in 'Crucifixa', the torment of unquenchable longing is also likened to crucifixion.

### **Mythical Femmes Fatales**

Longing, in *Auf Kypros* as in other works by Marie Madeleine, is unquestionably beautiful. Yet it tends to come to a brutal conclusion, in which the woman is deflowered and crucified or the man becomes a slave to his id. Most often, it is the women who triumph. In 'Ballade' it is a forest witch, whose charms a pious family man, Herr Edelfried, cannot resist. The poem opens with Herr Edelfried's loyal wife begging him not to go into the forest. But Herr Edelfried wants to visit the witch one last time – in order to tell her that he will not come again – and off he rides into the forest. The witch is quite a spectacle, with blossoms of foxglove, a poisonous flower associated with Medieval witchcraft, adorning her hair:

Die Hexe lag auf dem Drudenstein.  
Wie blutige Tropfen glühten  
in ihrem abgrundschwarzen Haar  
die roten Fingerhutblüten. (p. 72)

She tells Herr Edelfried of a harrowing vision she had while waiting for him of 'Nebelfrauen' who sang 'von eines Kindes Blut \ und seinem Todeschreie' (p. 73). Nonetheless, she throws her arms around Herr Edelfried, who, crossing himself, is able to resist the temptress. He tells her that he longs to live virtuously with his wife and son again and that he has taken a holy vow in 'Sankt Magdalenens Kapelle' to do

so. Thus, he manages to escape the witch, despite the darkly erotic display she presents to him, in her desperation:

Sie warf sich nieder auf den Grund.  
Um ihren Leib, den schlanken,  
wucherten Moos und Schierlingskraut  
und dornige Brombeerranken. (p. 76)

But as autumn comes around, Herr Edelfried hears the witch's voice calling to him from deep within the forest and he cannot resist. When he returns to his castle in high spirits, the consequence of his broken oath awaits him upstairs. His son lies dead in front of the 'Marienbild'.

At first glance, this poem may seem like a call to Christian morality, but in truth, it is as thoroughly pagan as anything else in *Auf Kypros*. Female idols dominate the story. There is no mention of God but rather of 'Mutter Marie', 'Sankt Magdalenens Kapelle', a 'Marienbild' and of course the pagan witch and the 'Nebelfrauen'. To a thoroughly un-Christian degree, women hold the power in this poem. They are supernatural enchantresses as well as idols and spirits who offer redemption or exact punishment. The men are helpless. Herr Edelfried cannot overcome the witch's charms, while his son ends up dead in front of the *Marienbild*. The witch remains unscathed despite her own sinfulness, her lust for Herr Edelfried having been satisfied once again.

The poem 'Sumpfhexe' presents an equally impenitent witch, as she fantasises about seducing a blond *Junker* out of lust, not love:

Die junge Hexe tauchte empor  
aus dem giftverpesteten Hochlandsmoor.  
Ihre Rätselaugen stierten  
verträumt in die schwelende Mittagsglut.  
'Nimm dich in Acht, du junges Blut,  
du mit den Sonnenhaaren.' (p. 91)

The witches of both poems are classic embodiments of a principle that Nietzsche associates with the Greek god of wine and festivity, Dionysus. It is the vegetal, chthonic aspect of life, which the West has tended to associate pejoratively with women. Dionysus stands in opposition to Apollo, the sun god, who represents in Nietzschean philosophy the flash of light and reason, which attempts to rebel against nature's murkiness and establish control and hierarchy. The blond *Junker* of 'Sumpfhexe' is a typical embodiment of the ethereal, Apollonian principle, with his *Sonnenhaaren* and his aristocratic lineage. The concept of 'Sumpfhexe' is analogous to the painting 'Aufschwung' (1924) by the *Jugendstil* artist Fidus, in which a young

woman with flowing, black hair wraps herself around the lower legs of a long, blond young man who stands erect (fig. 6). It is the triumph of Apollo over Dionysus. Marie Madeleine, however, always lets Dionysus triumph over Apollo. In later works, it is the triumph of the *femme fatale*, as in the play *Das bißchen Liebe* or the triumph of the flesh, as in short story collection *Aber das Fleisch ist stark!* In the poem at hand, it is the witch's seduction of the young *Junker*:

Schweigen und weisser Sonnenbrand  
über rotblühendem Heideland,  
über Zittergras und Rohr. --  
Sie presste mit einem stöhnendem Laut  
ihre Lippen auf seine weisse Haut. --  
Das Wasser stieg über das Moor. (p. 92)

The final line is likely to be an evocation of female sexual arousal, with the white 'Sonnenbrand', the Apollonian principle, heating up the red heath and the secretion of water over the moor, just as the witch kisses the Junker's 'weisse Haut', moaning with desire.

Though women triumph frequently in *Auf Kypros*, there is nothing groundbreaking in the way they do so. They triumph with their sexual allure. It is the sort of power that women have traditionally wielded within Europe's patriarchal order. But Marie Madeleine sets herself apart from other artists and thinkers of the time in that she glorifies this stereotype. Her early writing is neither a feminist call for more consequential, female empowerment, nor a moralistic attack on female sexuality. It is an outright celebration of female sexual power, which had been demonised by men for centuries. It is a rare exaltation of the sexually aggressive female and, as already indicated, the first such exaltation by a female poet.

### **Dark Arcadian Landscapes**

With 'Ballade' and 'Sumpfhexe', Marie Madeleine also introduces us to her fascination with darkly erotic landscapes, with sultry highland moors or brambly forests where lustful witches dwell. She elaborates on this motif in 'Von Kypros nach Golgotha', which is placed near the end of *Auf Kypros*. The poem is a young woman's narrative of her tormented journey through a mystical realm of the senses. As the poem reaches its conclusion, it becomes clear that it is addressed to a man whose love for her has died, and who seems to be responsible for the narrator's unquenchable longing. With the reference to Golgotha, we can regard the narrator as another 'Madonna', crucified for her lust, as in 'Crucifixa'.

The poem has the logic of a dream and perhaps it is also intended as an evocation of a dream; as in 'Lucifer', a winged demon comes to the narrator in the night and carries her away. Soon the narrator finds herself transported by the 'chorus of her passions' into a valley of sins, where her senses are awakened:

O! Meine Sinne blühten auf  
Wie Feuersglut um Morgenwinde.  
Es war der jungen Leiber Pracht  
Weiss wie der Glanz der üpp'gen Rosen,  
Die in der sel'gen Sommernacht  
Mit Mondlichtflammenwellen kosen. (p. 118)

The sumptuous imagery continues as the narrator recounts her experience in various symbolic dream landscapes that bear names evocative of the female sex: the 'Venushügel' and the 'Sündenthal'. These erotic elysiums are as beautiful as they are sinister, anticipating the morphine-induced dream landscapes of Marie Madeleine's later works. Indeed, the gothic 'Sündenthal' in 'Von Kypros nach Golgotha' seems to be full of narcotic plants and animals, which offer a glimpse of oblivion:

Ich ging so lang im Sündenthal;  
der Riesenblüten schwüle Dünste  
betäubten mich mit Abgrundsqual,  
mit purpurroten Truggespinnste.  
Der Fledermäuse Chor umschlang  
mein müdes Haupt in tollem Fluge,  
und dunklen Giftes Tropfen trank  
mein Mund mit jedem Atemzuge. (p. 119)

'Von Kypros nach Golgotha' is the crowning moment in a book full of fatiguing, tormented, adolescent longing. Only one untitled poem in *Auf Kypros*, which follows soon after 'Von Kypros nach Golgotha', offers a respite from all this beautiful agony:

Das aber ist das Ende allen Sehnsens,  
das ist der grossen Flammen letztes Glühn:  
Das müde Haupt Maria Magdalenens  
Auf deinen Knie'n! — — — (p. 122)

Madeleine is once again referring the fusion of spirituality and sexuality, which the Magdalene figure has come to symbolise. The 'Ende allen Sehnsens' is the happy integration of sexual longing into everyday religious experience.

### **A Priestess of Astarte**

Marie Madeleine's first publication following *Auf Kypros* elaborates on the topos of pagan sensuality and adds further dimensions to her writing. In the prelude of 'Die drei Nächte', Sibylle, a woman of nineteen – a year younger than Marie

Madeleine, when the play was published – visits her friend Maximilian, a decadent aesthete, at his bedside. He is dying on account of his overly ecstatic lifestyle and Sibylle informs him that, since he can no longer partake in love, she will come to him every night and tell him an erotic bed-time story: ‘Du wirst dich immer wieder berauschen an der einen Gewalt, die das Mächtigste ist auf Erden; die Völker und Welten entstehen läßt und läßt sie verfaulen und vermodern und von Neuem wieder geboren werden!’.<sup>15</sup> Employing the matriarchal imagery of *Auf Kypros*, Sibylle portrays as a great, cruel goddess, a supreme *femme fatale*:

Wenn ich an die Liebe denke, so sehe ich immer ein Weib auf hohem Thron. Und um sie herum Hügel von Toten und Verwundeten! Kinderleichen und tote Greise, verröchelnde Männer und sterbende Frauen, Jünglinge, die ihren letzten Kampf kämpfen, und Mädchen in ihrer Todesnoth! Und alle die brechenden Augen sind anbetend empor gerichtet zu dem Weibe auf dem hohen Thron, zu dem Weibe mit den abgründtiefen Augen und dem Siegerlächeln. (pp. 326-7)

Sibylle’s first story, which becomes the first act of the play, takes us back to the island of Cyprus. This time, however, it is not a symbolic Cyprus of the soul but literally the Cypriot coast in the year 550 B.C. It is here that race first becomes a clear-cut topos in Madeleine’s work, for Cyprus is indicative not only of eroticism but also of racial plurality. Since time immemorial the Mediterranean island has accommodated a startling array of cultures, from Greeks, Egyptians and Assyrians to Franks, Turks and Britons. In Madeleine’s play, we are introduced to two young Greek courtesans, who are gossiping about the Egyptians who have recently arrived on the island. One of the courtesans, Lydia, remarks scornfully: ‘Aber sie sind so klein und schwarz und riechen nach allerlei Weihrauch wie Weiber’ (p. 327). One of the other courtesans, a girl named Bacchis, is nonetheless quite in love with the Egyptian king, Amasis – she praises his youth and his dark beauty. Here it seems that Marie Madeleine has done some historical research. There was indeed an Egyptian King Amasis (Ahmose II) who was on the Egyptian throne in the year 550 B.C. His predecessor, Hophra, had already subjected Cyprus to Egyptian tribute and Amasis carried on the legacy. Little is known about Amasis himself, but it was under his reign that the first Greek colonies were established on Cyprus.<sup>16</sup>

Invoking Aphrodite, the courtesan Bacchis curses the Egyptian king’s lover, who is a priestess of a foreign and enigmatic goddess: ‘Aphrodite verdamme die weißen Glieder der Astarte-Priesterin, die der König mitgebracht aus Egypten [sic].

<sup>15</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die drei Nächte in Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 1. Leipzig: Verlag der Literaturwerke Minerva, 1924, p. 326.



Niemand weiß, wer die Göttin ist, der sie dient' (ibid.). Astarte is a Near Eastern goddess, who was introduced to Egypt at some point during the Eighteenth Dynasty. As Lydia explains to Bacchis: 'Sie sagen, es sei eine Göttin der Syrier und Chaldäer' (ibid.). Like Mary Magdalene and possibly the author herself, Astarte is therefore a Semite. She held a prominent place in pagan, Middle Eastern religion and her name occurs frequently in the Old Testament in a negative light since her worship posed a threat to Judaism. Three more Greek courtesans enter the scene and one of them discloses the Astarte-priestess's shocking religious beliefs: 'Und sie sagt, die Göttin der Liebe sei nicht Aphrodite, die Süße, die Lächelnde, – – sondern die Göttin der Liebe sei eine Göttin der Qual!' (p. 328). As the third courtesan confirms, Astarte is 'eine blasse Göttin mit schmerzvollen Augen und blutigen Wunden – –' (ibid.). The courtesans offer Aphrodite jewels and beg her to kill this strange priestess.

In the next scene we meet the priestess herself, in the company of her lover, the king. In the background stands 'eine Bildsäule der Göttin Astarte aus braunem Thon mit Augen von Opalen' (ibid.). We find the priestess downtrodden on account of the temperate climate of Cyprus. 'Dieses Land hat einen zu blauen Himmel,' she laments, 'Es blühen hier zu viele Blumen' (ibid.). She longs for the harsh climate of Egypt: 'ich denke immer an die fahlen Wüstennächte, – – an die weißen Mauern von Memphis, flammend in Sonnenglut' (ibid.). She also complains of the followers of Aphrodite, who are too sweet and innocent for her tastes. The king, however, believes that the followers of Aphrodite have every reason to be happy, which triggers the priestess's scorn. In confusion, the king then tries to certify that he knows what love is, by listing the various racial beauties he keeps in his palace back in Egypt:

Ich habe braune Egyptianen, ihre kleinen, schwarzen Flechten hängen über ihre Bronceschultern. Ich habe Aethiopierinnen, deren Zähne weißer sind als geschälte Mandeln, und ich habe so wunderschöne Judenmädchen vom Libanon, - ach! was für schmachtende Augen die haben! - -  
Ich habe Weiber aus den Barbarenländern; sie haben gelbe Haare und sind sehr groß.

Meinst Du, ich wisse nicht, was die Liebe sei?! (pp. 328-9)

At this point, the influence of the French decadent author Pierre Louÿs is unmistakable – something which Madeleine's contemporaries were quick to recognise.<sup>17</sup> Louÿs' novel *Aphrodite. Mœurs antiques*. (1896), which takes place in

<sup>16</sup> See George Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940, p. 109.

<sup>17</sup> As *Das literarische Echo* remarked regarding *Die drei Nächte*: 'Es scheint, als hätte Marie Madeleine das antike Milieu bei Pierre Louÿs [sic] [...] studiert' (Richard Wengraf, 'Die drei Nächte' in *Das*

ancient Alexandria, Egypt, explores the lives of pagan courtesans and their lovers. The city is portrayed as a multiracial place of pilgrimage to the goddess Aphrodite, where beautiful courtesans from all over Eurasia come to offer their goods.

After the Egyptian king Amasis lists his private collection of racial specimens, Mylitta begins articulating what seems to be an incantation to the goddess Astarte. Ultimately, she throws herself before the statue of Astarte with the following, concluding prayer: 'Du Schmerz der Liebe, Ewig-Hungrige, Ewig-Unersättliche, gönne Du mir die Sehnsucht, die nie gestillt ist!' (p. 329). It is a prayer for the cruel, tormented love that she prefers to the sweet innocence of the followers of Aphrodite and to the smug satisfaction of the king, with his many concubines. Perhaps it is also intended as revenge for this very promiscuity on the part of the king. In the end, Mylitta rejects the idea that she is Amasis' property and denies that she is capable of finding only Amasis attractive. She counters his list of concubines with her own list of both men and women she desires. She then asks Amasis, who has gone wild with jealousy, to let her go out into the world and quench her sexual thirst. The despairing king lets her depart on the condition that she return to him later, in order to tell him if there is someone else who is better able to satisfy her. Indeed, Mylitta soon returns to the king looking utterly defiled. Her white dress is not only dusty but also bloody – for reasons left to the reader's imagination. We soon discover that despite Mylitta's deep plunge into the realm of Dionysus, her thirst has still not been quenched. She longs for a young, dead Syrian, whom she saw on a boat in the harbour. As the frustrated priestess deplores: 'Ich wollte, er wäre ein wenig später gestorben, ein paar Stunden später!' (p. 332).

As in the poem 'Ballade', the fate of the characters in the first act of *Die drei Nächte* seems to be in the hands of goddesses and women. There are no references to gods, the only male priest is a devotee of Isis, the Greek courtesans are devotees of Aphrodite and in the dwelling of Amasis and Mylitta, a sculpture of Astarte looms ominously in the background. The king ends up emotionally enslaved to Mylitta, whose promiscuity he can do nothing about. After her departure, the enraged Amasis insults the priest of Isis out of jealousy – he was on Mylitta's list of people she desires. But the priest counters him by invoking Isis: 'Die große Isis wird diese Worte rächen!' (p. 331).

Matriarchy was certainly an intriguing concept for turn-of-the-century Europeans. Together with Eduard Fuchs, the Madeleine-aficionado Alfred Kind wrote a foundational work on women rulers and the worship of the feminine, in all its manifestations: *Die Weiberherrschaft in der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1913). The European literature of the day, from Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Ein weiblicher Sultan* (1873), an opulent and highly fictionalised biography of the czarina Elisabeth, to H. Rider Haggard's fantasy-adventure *She* (1887), also betrays an interest in matriarchy. Meanwhile, canonical anthropological works of the late nineteenth century, such as Johann Jakob Bachofen's *Das Mutterrecht* (1861) and James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890), theorised that mankind's first religion was matriarchal. Archaeological discoveries of prehistoric, female figurines, such as the Balzi-Rossi 'Venuses', excavated on the Franco-Italian border between 1883 and 1885, seemed to confirm this, as did the excavation of the Palace of Knossos on Crete, which began in 1900. In most cases, the notion of primitive religion as matriarchal posed little threat to post-Darwinian, turn-of-the-century consciousness – it merely confirmed that matriarchy was evolutionarily inferior to patriarchy.

In the young, dead Syrian of *Die drei Nächte*, Marie Madeleine may be alluding to Baal, the young consort of the Syrian goddess Astarte. He may also be an allusion to Osiris, Isis's lover, who was murdered, hacked up and tossed into the Nile River. In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer postulates that prehistoric religion was characterised by a dominant, fertility goddess and her young male lovers and sons, whose yearly death and rebirth signified seasonal change. Such pre-patriarchal, fertility gods recur in Marie Madeleine's later poetry, which includes odes to Adonis, Baldur and Endymion. We have already encountered them in mortal form as the blond *Fürstenhaupt* of 'Eine Priesterin der Aphrodite' or the dead child in front of the *Marienbild* in 'Ballade'. They are a testimony to Marie Madeleine's particular brand of feminism, which embraces female, sexual power and tends to regard men as slaves to their sexual desire and often reduces them to their role as fertilisers.

Meanwhile, the priestess of Astarte, with her 'glanzlosen Augen' (p. 34), as well as Astarte herself, 'eine blasse Göttin mit schmerzvollen Augen und blutigen Wunden', seem to be ancient versions of the weary, young women of *Auf Kypros*, who are tormented by insatiable lust. In importing a cruel and intoxicating notion of love from the East, Mylitta, as we will later discover, also parallels Marie Madeleine's recurrent, Russian *femmes fatales*, who torment their Western European

lovers. Indeed, the *russalka*, the Slavic nymph in Madeleine's next collection of poetry *An der Liebe Narrenseil*, also has deathly eyes: 'Und ihre Augen sind so tot \ So voll Verdammnis wie die Steppe'.<sup>18</sup> Like the priestess Mylitta, her physiognomy evokes the harsh, eastern climate from which she originates.

In the years following the publication of *Auf Kypros* and *Die drei Nächte*, such issues of race would increasingly become the channel for Madeleine's romantic fantasy. Racial types replace pagan priestesses, Magdalene and Lucifer figures as totems of sensuality, and except in a few brief instances, pagan cultures and fantastical landscapes do not appear in Madeleine's writing again. Her next publication, *Die indische Felsentaube*, with its Franco-Russian *femme fatale* protagonist, would already be typical of Madeleine's novellas of society, which tend to revolve around figures of foreign, mixed or incestuous race.

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<sup>18</sup> Marie Madeleine, *An der Liebe Narrenseil*, p. 75.

### **CHAPTER 3: MARIE MADELEINE AND TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY RACIAL TYPOLOGY**

Turn-of-the-century Germany was characterised by an obsession with the upkeep, adornment and overall aesthetic possibilities of the human body, which came to be regarded as a highly refined work of art, a masterpiece of nature. This was the age of *Lebensreform* and *Freikörperkultur* and of *Jugendstil* pictures of stretching, swirling bodies. In such a milieu, it is only logical that the racial differences in human appearance would end up taking on the connotation of artistic styles. As we will discover, in the literature, illustrated newspapers and paintings of the day, racial appearance plays, more than anything else, an aesthetic and decorative role. This is a particularly marked feature of Marie Madeleine's writing, though it resounds in the work of many of her contemporaries, most notably Thomas Mann. In stories by both authors, racial beauty also frequently provides the basis for the attraction of one character to another, thus bearing no small significance to the stories as a whole.

It is also important to remember that, in great contrast to the position taken by most contemporary scientists, the majority of turn-of-the-century Europeans felt that racial variation manifested itself in the mind as well as the body. The races of man were thought to exhibit tremendous psychological differences, even from one region of Europe to another. Thus, the aestheticisation of race in turn-of-the-century culture went well beyond mere portrayals of appearance – the purported psychological variances of the races also became colours on many artists' palettes. At times, it almost seems as if turn-of-the-century Europe conceived of itself as a fairytale land populated not by giants, dwarves and elves, but by Germans, Italians and Slavs. Arthur Comte de Gobineau (1816-1882), the French founder of racial theory, himself argued that the dwarves, fairies, satyrs and other demi-human figures of Indo-European, Aryan mythology were nothing other than the small, dark peoples whom the tall, blond Indo-Europeans encountered as they descended upon continental Europe.<sup>1</sup> The myth of the changeling, for instance, supposedly reflected real events in Aryan prehistory, in which the natives of the European continent sought to steal Aryan children in order to better their race, leaving their own brood in exchange (p. 726). Similar ideas were echoed in later German anthropology, when, for instance, Theodor Poesche postulated that the dark, pre-Aryan inhabitants of the Alps might be

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<sup>1</sup> See Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* in *Œuvres*, vol. 1. Paris: Gallimard, 1983, pp. 735-6.

the ‘Volk des Zwergkönigs Laurin’<sup>2</sup> (p. 192) or when Gustav Kraitschek considered the origin of the satyr: ‘Es sei hier der Vermutung Ausdruck gegeben, daß auch bei der Schöpfung des breitgesichtigen, stumpfnasigen Satyrtypus eine anarische brachycephale Bevölkerung als Modell gedient habe’.<sup>3</sup>

It is true that Gobineau had a low opinion of the pre-Aryan inhabitants Europe, whom he believed were of the Mongoloid, or ‘Finnish’ race. He ascribed the supposed decadence of European culture to the excessive interbreeding of robust Aryans with these purportedly over-sensual and unintelligent aborigines – a notion that would influence the German anthropology of the day. German anthropologists, however, tended to argue that the Teutonic peoples were the purest Aryans remaining in Europe – a clear-cut break with Gobineau, who professed that all European peoples had degenerated more or less equally. Certainly, this chauvinist standpoint left its mark on the writing of Madeleine, but so did the romanticisation of racial mixture, which, as we will explore in this course of this chapter, was equally recurrent at the turn of the century.

### **Racial Beauty – Some Examples from Marie Madeleine’s Work**

As we have indicated, Madeleine’s hybrid of decadence and popular fiction presents a sort of ‘triumph of the flesh’ over morality and reason. Such titles of short-story collections as *Aber das Fleisch ist Stark!* (1910), *Brennende Liebe* (1910), *Küsse* (1913), or *Glimmende Liebesglut* (1924) forewarn the reader as to the merciless recurrence of this theme in her work. In text after text, Madeleine’s characters undergo exotic sensual experiences or succumb to hidden erotic impulses. This humid atmosphere shimmers with images of *Rassenschönheit*, that is, racially specific beauty, a term coined in 1901 by the German racial theorist Carl Heinrich Stratz. Such aesthetic visions of race are often central to Madeleine’s story lines; at other times they are simply atmospheric effects.

Madeleine’s writing changed little from her first poems in 1900 to her last short stories, dating from the end of the Weimar Republic. In the 1920s, it was still marked by the kitsch-aestheticist style and decadent themes that characterised so much of popular fiction twenty years earlier. Indeed, some of the most exemplary

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<sup>2</sup> Theodor Poesche, *Die Arier*, Jena: Hermann Costenoble, 1878, p. 192.

<sup>3</sup> Gustav Kraitschek, ‘Die Menschenrassen Europas’, pp. 498-522 in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 1, no. 7, 1902, p. 509.



images of racial beauty in Madeleine's work occur in her short stories of the 1920s and it is from here that we will draw our first examples.

In the short story *Juwelen* (1926), Madeleine portrays an exclusive jewellery exhibition, in which the racially contingent appearance of the models complements the gemstones they present. First in line is a Malaysian girl, who presents amber jewellery:

da schimmerten die üppigen Formen einer in erster, schwellender Jugendblüte stehenden Malaiin. Ihr Körper war von der halb durchsichtigen, bräunlich gelblichen Mattheit des Bernsteins, und der Bernstein, – das zum Juwel erstarrte edle Harz, – war es auch, den sie vorzuführen hatte. Geschnittene Ketten und Spangen und Ringe aus Bernstein umgaben, verdeckten ein wenig ihre geschmeidige Nacktheit, schufen eine Harmonie von schwerem trüben Rauchbraun bis hinauf zum Goldschimmer des hellsten Sonnengelb.<sup>4</sup>

The racially contingent appearance of the Malaysian girl – the golden-brown skin and the black hair – is treated here as if it were a polished gemstone itself, specially designed for aesthetic pleasure. Following the Malaysian is a young Russian woman who presents garnet jewellery:

Eine hochgewachsene, zarte Russin mit langen seidenblonden Zöpfen; aus ihren großen, grauen Augen sprach alle Schwermut der Steppe, alle Traurigkeit der langen, frostklirrenden Winternächte; auf ihrem weißen Halse brannten große Sterne aus düsterrot glühenden Granaten; die blitzten auch in dem bleichen Golde ihrer Haare, legten sich, in Spangen gefaßt, um die schmalen Knöcheln ihrer schönen nackten Füße. (p. 146)

Unlike the race of the Malaysian, which corresponds to the gemstone she presents, the Nordic elements of the Russian woman's race – her pale skin, blond hair and gray eyes – provide a tasteful contrast to the dark and fiery garnet. We also observe that, in the description of the Russian woman's eyes, the narrator evokes the spacious landscape and the chilly climate from whence her race originates. As we will continue to find throughout this study, such aesthetic association of a race with its native landscape is particularly common in the work of Madeleine and her contemporaries.

Not surprisingly, the enjoyment of racial difference often has a distinctly erotic element. A perfect example is the passage, mentioned in chapter two, from *Die drei Nächte*, in which the Egyptian King Amasis lists the races of women at his palace in Thebes. Madeleine reworked the passage for the play *Katzen*, in which the racial aspect of Amasis's harem is even more apparent:

Ich habe so viel Frauen aus Ägypten

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<sup>4</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Juwelen* in *Die Töchter des Prometheus*. Berlin: Gebrüder Paetel, 1926, p. 145.

Mit schmalen Leibern und mit großen Augen,  
 Und ihre kleinen, schwarzen Zöpfe hängen  
 Tief auf der Schultern blasses Bronzebraun. –  
 Ich habe schwarze Weiber aus Aethiopien  
 Mit muskelstarken, üppig-runden Gliedern,  
 Und ihre blanke Zähne, sind so weiß  
 Wie junge Mandeln, die man frisch geschält.  
 Sie lachten wild mit diesen weißen Zähnen  
 Und lehrten mich die Laster ihres Volks. – –  
 Dann habe ich so schöne Judenmädchen  
 Vom Libanon. Es ruht ein blauer Hauch  
 Auf ihres Augenapfels blassem Weiß,  
 Und ihrer Augen Sterne sind so schmachkend,  
 Wie ich es nie bei andern Völkern sah. – –  
 Auch hab' ich aus den Ländern der Barbaren  
 So viele Frau'n mit bernsteingelben Haaren;  
 Sie sind sehr groß und sprechen tief und rauh. –<sup>5</sup>

The beauty of Jewish, Black African and 'barbarian' (i.e. Teutonic, Slavic or Celtic) women is praised equally here, indicating that Madeleine was unprejudiced in her voluptuous enjoyment of racial difference. Again, the influence of Pierre Louÿs is manifest. At least two scenes in his *Aphrodite. Mœurs antiques* could have inspired this passage and others in Madeleine's work. Early on in *Aphrodite*, the courtesan Chrysis, who belongs to 'une race aryenne',<sup>6</sup> orders her Indian slave Djala to sing her a song, the object of which is to compare the differing racial beauty of the two women. Of Chrysis's hair, for instance, Djala sings: 'tes cheveux sont comme un essaim d'abeilles suspendu le long d'un arbre', as opposed to her own hair, which is 'comme une rivière infinie dans la plaine, où le soir enflammé s'écoule' (p. 31). The Indian slave goes on to compare their every body part in a similarly poetic fashion, hesitating only when it comes to their nether regions, when the more forthright Aryan woman must continue for her. In another scene, Louÿs describes the various races of the courtesans in the 'jardins de la déesse', the fantastical courtesan-district, in great detail. All the races of the world are represented, from classic Near Eastern beauties to 'Teutones gigantesques qui terrifiaient les Égyptiens par leurs cheveux pâles comme ceux des vieillards et leurs chairs plus molles que celles des enfants' (pp. 81-82). There are also East Asian women 'qui ressemblaient à des singes jaunes' (p. 81) and Black African women 'enveloppées de costume multicolores' (p. 82).

But whereas Louÿs was preoccupied only with female, racial beauty, Madeleine distinguished herself by applying such imagery to men as well. Exemplary

<sup>5</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Katzen in Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 2, p. 367

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Louÿs, *Aphrodite. Mœurs Antiques*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1939, p. 21.

is a passage from Madeleine's novella *Die Wegweiserin* of 1908. Here, the young German Frey's Teutonic good looks serve as an artistic contrast to his Mediterranean surroundings: 'In dieser südlichen Umgebung fielen die Merkmale nordischer Rasse, die sich in Freys Erscheinung ausprägten, noch mehr auf als in seiner deutschen Heimat'<sup>7</sup>. When he strolls through Eze, a picturesque village on the French Riviera, a delighted female native exclaims, 'Wie blond er ist!' (p. 156). The narrator furthermore compares Frey's blue eyes, an 'Erbteil seiner norwegischen Vorfahren' (p. 156), to the gemstone turquoise. As Frey is also the name of the Norse god of fertility, it seems that Marie Madeleine was intent on portraying a fully coherent specimen of the Teutonic race, in the same way that she portrays, in *Katzen*, the Egyptian king's love-slaves as archetypal specimens of their own races. As we will observe throughout this study, men are just as much *objets d'art* in Madeleine's world as women, something which was indeed innovative for Madeleine's day and age.

At times, Madeleine's portrayals of race are brief and nonchalant. Race is simply tagged onto a character like a brand name. In *Das letzte Licht* (1907), for instance, Fräulein Margarete von Heerburg is described as 'ein großes, üppiges Mädchen von unverkennbar norddeutschem Typus [...]'.<sup>8</sup> In *Das Armband* (1908), regarding the blond beauty of a girl named Eva von Thol, Madeleine writes: 'So ein guter, norddeutscher Schlag, – blaue Augen und eine Fülle goldblonder Haare, – hoch und schlank und frisch'.<sup>9</sup> It is as if Madeleine were appraising a fine wine. Sometimes, such nonchalant descriptions take on a scholarly tone, as if Madeleine were emulating or satirising an anthropological text of her time. Of an Englishman in the short story *Die Tochter des Prometheus* (1926), the narrator remarks: 'Er gehörte zu der Sorte von großen, schlanken, blondhaarigen Langschädeln, wie sie in solcher Vollendung bloß England, Schweden und einige Landstriche Norddeutschlands aufweisen'.<sup>10</sup> Such use of exacting racial categories is typical of early twentieth-century Europe. For many educated people living in the wake of

<sup>7</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die Wegweiserin* in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 1, p. 156.

<sup>8</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Das letzte Licht* in *Die letzte Hürde* in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 2, p. 257.

<sup>9</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Das Armband* in *Die Stelle, wo sie sterblich sind...* in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 1, p. 273.

<sup>10</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die Tochter des Prometheus* in *Die Töchter des Prometheus*, p. 18. 'Langschädel' was a common term among certain German anthropologists of the day who believed that one of the keys to classifying the races of man was by skull shape and size. It goes back to the 'science' of phrenology, founded by Franz Joseph Gall in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and was later exploited by the Nazis.

Darwin, it simply seemed modern to refer to the races of one's fellow humans in the same way that one would refer to breeds of cats, dogs or horses. In our own time, as the world attempts to recover from a century of racial conflict and genocide, such an enjoyment of racial categories seems at best highly frivolous and at worst like a precursor to the rigorous and highly chauvinistic categorisation of races undertaken by Nazi scientists. But here, as elsewhere in this study, we should keep in mind that Madeleine was writing decades before the Holocaust in a more innocent time when racial categorisation did not automatically indicate racial prejudice.

### **The Influence of Carl Heinrich Stratz**

The trend towards the aestheticisation of race in the literary world was paralleled and influenced by the aestheticisation of race in scholarly works. The milieu in which the latest theories of natural science and the latest discourse of the art world blended together – so aptly represented by the physicist and psychologist Ernst Mach – applied to racial theory as much as to anything else. Though he lacked the intellect of a scholar like Mach, the racial theorist Carl Heinrich Stratz was another such figure who mixed scientific and aesthetic theory, ultimately exercising considerable influence on the whole of German-speaking culture. Originally a gynaecologist, Stratz went on to write studies of not only the physical properties of the female body but also its aesthetic value – such as *Die Schönheit des weiblichen Körpers* (1899) – and most famously, the aesthetic value of its various racial manifestations. His best-selling book *Die Rassenschönheit des Weibes* (1901) contains over two hundred photographs of women from across the world, in various stages of undress, many of which he took himself. The models are generally chosen for either their beauty or their archetypal representation of a particular race and are organised into chapters based on extensive racial categories. Their racially contingent features are analysed in depth from both a pseudo-scientific and a romantic-aesthetic point of view. From Hottentots to Lapps and from Samoans to Ainos, Stratz attempts to provide documentation of every possible racial nuance in its feminine manifestation (figs. 7-19). Only female models were used under the pretence that women are more exemplary, more basic models of race than men.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> As Stratz writes: 'Während beim Mann schon in äusserlichen Zeichen, wie Haar- und Bartwuchs, die Individualität jeweils zu ihrer höchsten Ausbildung kommt, repräsentiert das Weib die Gattung in viel reinerer Form [...] Beim Mann kann die Individualität völlig beherrschen, bei der Frau ordnet sie sich dem

The book enjoyed immense popularity, remaining in print until the fall of the Third Reich, and it seems that Marie Madeleine and many other writers and journalists of her day found inspiration in it. Along with the first German translation (1898-1901) of Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, Stratz's book is probably one of the main catalysts behind the sudden increase in racial-aesthetic discourse in Germany around 1900. Indeed, Stratz seems to have invented a lighter, 'sexier' form of racial theory that appealed to wide audiences. More than a decade after the initial publication of *Rassenschönheit*, Max Hirsch celebrated its latest edition with the grand remark that it was 'kein Lehrbuch sondern ein Kunstschatz', which offers 'einen Genuss auserlesener Art', free of 'wissenschaftliche[r] Diskussion' and 'Streit um Theorien'.<sup>12</sup> As Hirsch concludes in sublime contemplation: 'Was das menschliche Auge geschaut, die photographische Kammer festgehalten hat, wird wiedergegeben, betrachtet, erläutert, verglichen' (p. 345). Nowhere is the nature of turn-of-the-century Germany's infatuation with race more apparent than here. Though chauvinist and rigorous scholars of race abounded, the general public was – like Max Hirsch – primarily interested in the aesthetic enjoyment of racial variety.

From his introduction onwards, Stratz makes it clear that his book is as much a work of aesthetic appreciation as a scientific study. Employing the kitsch-romantic language so typical of the day, Stratz expresses on the first page his profound enthusiasm for the diversity of women's coloration:

In dieser Welt von Wundern wandelt als schönste Zierde das menschliche Weib in tausenderlei Gestaltung. Der zarte Leib ist bei der einen weiss wie frische Milch, bei der anderen gelb wie mattes Elfenbein, bei dieser glänzt er in hellem Goldbraun, bei jener in dunklem Ebenholzscharz. Bald golden wie Sonnenstrahlen, bald roth wie Flammenzungen, bald schwarz wie Rabengefieder sind die langen, weichen Haare, und die feuchten Augen so blau wie der Himmel oder so schwarz wie die Nacht. (p. 1)

Except for the fact that it lacks any trace of irony, this passage could be straight out of a text by Marie Madeleine or Pierre Louÿs. And such language continues throughout the study. As he makes the transition from the Southern to the Northern European races, for instance, Stratz remarks:

Auch die gluthäugigen, schwarzlockigen Frauengestalten des üppigen, weichen Südens verschwinden mehr und mehr, und statt ihrer erstrahlen in zarteren Farben

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Rassencharakter unter. (C. H. Stratz, *Die Rassenschönheit des Weibes*, Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1902, p. 5.)

<sup>12</sup> Max Hirsch, 'Dr. C.H. Stratz, Die Rassenschönheit des Weibes', pp. 245-6 in *Sexual-Probleme*, May 1913, p. 345.

mit milchweisser Haut und rosigen Wangen die blondgezöpften, blauäugigen Schönheiten des Nordens. (p. 300)

If we were to take such exuberant passages out of context and page through Stratz's collection of sumptuous photos without reading the commentary, we would have the impression that he was as much an unprejudiced admirer of racial beauty as Madeleine or Louÿs. However, in order to understand the connotations of Stratz's word 'Rassenschönheit' – and how many of his contemporaries would have interpreted it – it is worth pointing out that Stratz could write just as ardently about European superiority as many of his colleagues. In his introduction, Stratz establishes this chauvinist position in the popular, pseudo-Darwinian terms of the day:

Dasjenige Geschlecht, das im Kampf ums Dasein die meisten Erfolge errungen, sich zu einer herrschenden Stellung zwischen den anderen emporgeschwungen hat, darf auch als das höchstentwickelte angesehen werden. Und dies Geschlecht ist unleugbar die weisse Rasse. (p. 2)

It is on this supposition that Stratz bases his theory of 'Rassenschönheit', in which the beauty of each race is measured by the degree of its similarity to 'white' beauty: 'Die Beurtheilung der übrigen Rassen ergibt sich dann aus dem grösseren oder geringeren Grade, in dem sie sich dieser vollendeten Form nähern oder von ihr abweichen' (p. 4). Thus, Stratz differentiates between what he calls 'Rassentypus' and true 'Rassenschönheit':

Als Rassentypus kann jedes Individuum gelten, das die der Rasse eigenthümlichen Merkmale besitzt; Rassenschönheit aber kommt einem Körper zu, bei dem die Rassenmerkmale so weit abgeschwächt sind, dass sie die Grenzen der Schönheit nicht überschreiten. (p. 4)

In other words, Stratz conceives of racial beauty as an exotic rendition of ideal white beauty, which – as his later comments illustrate – can be summed up as a thin but curvy body and finely chiselled, level features. Of course, none of these features are peculiar to the white race and all of them are universally admired since they convey youth, fertility and health. Features that truly differentiate the white race from some other races, such as pale skin or unfolded eyes, seem to be less important to Stratz's aesthetics, though they are sometimes cited as the only things preventing a beauty of a different race from being a true 'Rassenschönheit'.

This formula – the voluptuous portrayal of racial characteristics tempered with the pretence of chauvinistic aesthetic judgement – was by no means invented by Stratz; it had been latent in European culture for years already. An early Thomas Mann short story, *Der Wille zum Glück* (1896), already bears its mark in the narrator's description of the *belle juive*, Ada Stein:



Sie war von eleganter Gestalt, aber für ihr Alter reifen Formen und machte mit ihren sehr weichen und fast trägen Bewegungen kaum den Eindruck eines so jungen Mädchens. Ihr Haar, das sie über die Schläfen und in zwei Locken in die Stirn frisiert trug, war glänzend schwarz und bildete einen wirksamen Kontrast zu der matten Weiße ihres Teints. Das Gesicht ließ zwar mit seinen vollen und feuchten Lippen, der fleischigen Nase und den mandelförmigen, schwarzen Augen, über denen sich dunkle und weiche Brauen wölbten, nicht den geringsten Zweifel aufkommen über ihre wenigstens zum Teil semitische Abstammung, war aber von ganz ungewöhnlicher Schönheit.<sup>13</sup>

The implication at the end of the passage is that Ada Stein is beautiful despite her Semitic features. In Stratzian terms, her racially contingent features are not so pronounced as to get in the way of her beauty, thus rendering her an example of *Rassenschönheit*, a privilege not enjoyed, for instance, by her mother, whom the narrator describes as a ‘häßliche, kleine Jüdin’ (p. 37). Nonetheless, it would seem to be Mann’s ironic intention, through his voluptuous descriptions, to convey that Ada is attractive not despite her Semitic features – her full wet lips, her fleshy nose, her dark, almond eyes with soft, dark brows – but precisely because of them. Stratz’s commentary, on the other hand, is entirely lacking in such subtlety. Yet the countless photographs in his book work against his pretence of ideal, white beauty as do many of his own enthusiastic appraisals of foreign womens’ bodies. Despite himself, Stratz reveals the equal sex appeal of all races. Indeed, it is likely that the book’s immense popularity had more to do with the impartial, male lust for female bodies of all races than with the racial-aesthetic theory in the margins.

*Die Rassenschönheit des Weibes* remains a typically fin-de-siècle phenomenon, with its insistence on regarding human beings as art objects and with the various races of woman taking on the connotation of artistic styles. Stratz, in fact, was not the first German scholar of the *belle époque* to categorise female racial beauty. In 1885, Heinrich Ploss published *Das Weib in der Natur- und Völkerkunde*, which included a section titled ‘Aesthetische Auffassung des Weibes’.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to Stratz, Ploss makes a remarkable if not always successful effort to remain unprejudiced in his analysis, into which he incorporates a great deal of documentation from travel writers. The ninth edition even prompted a writer for the otherwise chauvinist *Politisch-anthropologische Revue* to report: ‘Daß die Rassenmischung im allgemeinen die Frauenschönheit zu steigern geeignet ist, kann jetzt wohl als eine ziemlich

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Mann, *Der Wille zum Glück in Sämtliche Erzählungen*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1963, p. 37.

<sup>14</sup> See Dr. H. Ploss, *Das Weib in der Natur- und Völkerkunde*, vol. 1. Leipzig: Th. Grieben’s (sic) Verlag, 1885, pp. 28-68.

feststehende ethnographische Tatsache bezeichnet werden'.<sup>15</sup> In *Das Weib in der Natur- und Völkerkunde*, as in Stratz's work, there is a race-by-race analysis of female, racial beauty and a sense of poetry in racial difference, without Stratz's obsessive categorisation. We might therefore regard Stratz's book as simply the culmination and mass-popularisation of a phenomenon already well underway.

In the following decade the trend had not yet subsided, as Albert Friedenthals' *Das Weib im Leben der Völker* (1911) demonstrates. In two huge volumes brimming with sumptuous photographs, Friedenthal chronicles female customs and female bodies from even more regions of the world than Stratz managed to cover. To his credit, Friedenthal is also less concerned with defining female racial beauty, preferring, in his introduction at least, to emphasise the relativity of such conceptions and to leave things open to the reader.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, commentary on racial beauty and racial psychology abounds throughout his two volumes.

### **The Journalistic and Artistic Fascination with Race**

Coinciding approximately with the publication of *Die Rassenschönheit des Weibes* was the beginning of a decade-long journalistic fascination with images of race, particularly in Marie Madeleine's Berlin. From the first few years of the new century onwards, photographs of often half-naked women of various races adorn the pages of *Der Welt Spiegel*, the biweekly illustrated supplement to the *Berliner Tageblatt*. More often than not, these photographs are pure decoration without any relevance to the articles, just like the *Jugendstil* patterns creeping up the margins. On some occasions however, the photographs correspond to Stratzian articles about female, racial beauty. A collage titled 'Asiatische Schönheiten', for instance, includes four photos labelled 'Siamesin', 'Chinesin', 'Koreanerin', and 'Japanerin' and is accompanied by an article expressing a rather ambivalent admiration of Asian beauty, evoking Stratz's chauvinist discourse (fig. 20).<sup>17</sup> Another photo-collage portrays Chileans in traditional, hooded dress. It corresponds to an article, 'Chileanische Schönheiten' (fig. 21), which offers the following, kitsch-romantic mishmash of racial theory and aestheticism:

<sup>15</sup> Anon., 'Rassenmischung und Frauenschönheit' in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 8, no. 7, 1909, p. 379.

<sup>16</sup> see the section titled 'Vom Körper der Frauen. Der Begriff "Schönheit"' in Albert Friedenthal, *Das Weib im Leben der Völker*, vol. 1, Berlin: Verlaganstalt für Litteratur und Kunst, 1911, pp. XXV-XXVI.

<sup>17</sup> Anon., 'Dies und Jenes' in *Der Welt Spiegel*, 27 February 1908.

die chilenischen Frauen vereinigen Anmut und Würde mit einer angeborenen Natürlichkeit, die ebensoweit entfernt ist von Prüderie wie von Ausgelassenheit. Dabei gelten die Chileninnen für die schönsten Frauen Südamerikas, daher für die schönsten Frauen der Welt. Sie sind mittelgroß, schlank und biegsam von Gestalt, haben kleine zierliche Hände und Füße und ihr Antlitz, aus dem meist schwarze Glutaugen fröhlich in die Welt blitzen, ist sanft gerötet und frisch wie der eben geplückte Pfirsich.<sup>18</sup>

Once again, the world's races are treated as if they were a systematic work of art. In an earlier article on Chilean, female beauty, this time in the Berlin magazine *Die Woche* (fig. 22), the beauty of Chilean women is furthermore attributed to the mixture of Spanish and Native American blood in their veins:

Und in der That sind in wenigen Ländern der Erde alle günstigen Vorbedingungen für das Gedeihen edelster Frauenschönheit gegeben wie in Chile. Die überwältigende Mehrzahl der Chilenen sind Kreolen, hervorgegangen aus der Rassenmengung der erobernden Spanier mit den araukanischen Indianerstämmen, die die kriegerischen [sic] aber auch die formschönsten und als Nachkommen der peruanischen Inka die vornehmsten aller Indianer waren und, wo sie sich rein erhalten haben, in den Hochebenen zwischen den Anden und der Küste, noch sind.<sup>19</sup>

*Die Woche* calls this a 'wundervoll[e] Rassenmischung' (ibid.) and it is no coincidence, but rather a testimony to the penetrating atmosphere of racial fascination at the time, that Thomas Mann himself would later portray, in *Königliche Hoheit* (1909), the enthusiasm that Germans harboured for noble, Native American blood.

In this lighthearted novel, in which, according to Mann himself, 'eine gebrochene, satirisch gefärbte und zum Grotesken geneigte Sympathie [...] jeder Art von "Sonderfall" zugewandt wird',<sup>20</sup> the young German prince Klaus Heinrich falls in love with Imma Spoelmann, who has South American Indian blood on her father's side. Her exotic features – stubbornly straight, blue-black hair, huge, dark eyes and an overall child-like appearance – dazzle Klaus Heinrich and are frequently described throughout the novel in Mann's famous leitmotif style. Rather than causing a scandal, Klaus Heinrich's choice of a racially exotic woman is actually regarded as advantageous for the royal line. In informing Klaus Heinrich's retiring older brother Albrecht about Klaus Heinrich's choice, the master of ceremonies Knobelsdorff gives mention to 'der vierfachen Blutzusammensetzung Imma Spoelmanns – den außer dem deutschen, portugiesischen und englischen fließe ja, wie man vernähme, auch

<sup>18</sup> M.B., 'Chilenische Schönheiten' in *Der Welt Spiegel*, 27 August 1908.

<sup>19</sup> Anon., 'Chilenische Schönheiten' in *Die Woche*, 8 September 1900, p. 1597.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Mann, 'Vorwort zu einer amerikanischen Ausgabe von *Königliche Hoheit*' in *Gesammelte Werke in Zwölf Bänden*, vol. 11. Fischer: Frankfurt am Main, 1960, p. 576.

ein wenig von dem uradligen Blut der Indianer in ihren Adern'.<sup>21</sup> He moreover emphasises, 'daß er sich von der belebenden Wirkung, welche die Mischung der Rassen bei alten Geschlechtern hervorzubringen vermöge, für die Dynastie das Beste verspreche' (ibid.). Klaus Heinrich's adoring people also come to treasure the exotic Imma as 'das schwarzbleiche, kostbare und eigentümlich liebliche Wesen von schillernder Blutzusammensetzung' (p. 337).

But to get a feel for the diverging sentiments regarding racial beauty at this time, we need only regard yet another article on Chilean, female beauty in the chauvinistic journal *Die Erde*. Here, the author insists that it is not Amerindian admixture but rather the relative purity of the Chilean noblewoman's white blood, which is responsible for her legendary beauty.<sup>22</sup>

*Der Welt Spiegel*, *Die Woche* and other journals furthermore exhibit a particular fascination with unusual racial mixtures and racial oddities. In one issue of *Der Welt Spiegel*, for instance, we find a brief article with photograph about a young mulatto girl residing in Berlin (fig. 23). Again, it is the specifics of racial appearance that are of central interest: 'Sie vereinigt die kaukasischen Gesichtszüge ihrer Mutter mit der Hautfarbe ihres Vaters'.<sup>23</sup> Another issue includes a photo entitled 'Eine weisse Negerin', in which an exceptionally light-skinned Black woman – an albino – is seen standing next to her more typically dark-skinned 'sister' (fig. 24) The brief, corresponding article is rife with the now familiar kitsch-romantic language, which could be straight out of *Die Rassenschönheit des Weibes*:

Die Natur hat oft seltsame Launen und in einer solchen schuf sie die Negerin mit blendend-weißer Hautfarbe, grauen Augen und weißlich-hellblondem Haar. Trotz der abnormalen Färbung trägt das Gesicht des Albinos, denn ein solcher ist das junge Weib, den ausgesprochensten Negertypus, sogar vielmehr als der Kopf ihrer ebenholz-schwarzen Schwester, die auch nach europäischen Begriffen für hübsch gelten kann.<sup>24</sup>

Like other racial exemplars, this albino African was photographed not in her homeland but in Germany, where she was on display at 'Castans Panoptikum' in Berlin. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century and particularly during the *belle époque*, non-European peoples were frequently on display in zoo-like set-ups all over Europe, often in the so-called *Völkerschauen*, which so inspired the Viennese author

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Mann, *Königliche Hoheit*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1961, p. 338.

<sup>22</sup> see Carl Mordhorst, 'Chilenische Schönheiten' in *Die Erde*, June 1913, pp. 386-7.

<sup>23</sup> Anon., 'Messina' in *Der Welt Spiegel*, 19 September 1901.

<sup>24</sup> Anon., 'Eine weisse Negerin' in *Der Welt Spiegel*, 4 December 1902.

Peter Altenberg.<sup>25</sup> Here too, it was not so much the culture as the racially contingent difference in appearance that interested the public.

But just as in the work of Madeleine or Thomas Mann, it is not solely or even primarily non-European races that adorn the pages of *Der Welt Spiegel* or *Die Woche*. We find collages and articles titled, for instance, 'Russische Schönheit',<sup>26</sup> (figs. 25-7) 'Englische Schönheiten',<sup>27</sup> (fig. 28), 'Angelsächsische Frauenschönheit',<sup>28</sup> 'Schöne Frauen I. Wienerinnen',<sup>29</sup> or 'Spanische Frauengestalten'.<sup>30</sup> In 'Angelsächsische Frauenschönheit', the author purports that 'die Albionstöchter' have become particularly charming through 'allerlei Rassenkreuzungen' and likens the three main racial influences of the British woman – the Celtic, Germanic and Norman – to the elements water, earth and fire respectively.<sup>31</sup> As he comments with historical sophistication: 'Brünette Schönheiten gibt es neben den Blondinen; denn starke Spuren des Normannentums sind nirgends geschwunden' (ibid.). Indeed, while anthropologists of our own day refer very cautiously to just a few indistinct races of mankind, differing from one another only in physical traits, many Germans of the *belle époque* perceived racial groups with distinct physical and psychological traits in each province of every European nation. As the poet Hans Bethge wrote in his article 'Die Spanierin' for *Die Erde*:

Man kann nur in bedingter Weise schlechtweg von der Spanierin sprechen. Es gibt eine ganze Reihe von spanischen Frauentypen, infolge der mannigfachen Mischungen des Blutes in den verschiedenen Teilen des Landes. Die Frau in Katalonien ist, nach Fühlen und Gestalt, sehr verschieden von der Andalusierin, und die Madrileña, das Mädchen von Madrid, sehr anders als die Valenciana.<sup>32</sup>

Germans applied this same sense of racial nuances to their own nation as well. As Albert Friedenthal writes of his countrymen, 'Bei den Reichsdeutschen, besonders in Preußen und zumal östlich von der Elbe hat eine intensive Vermischung mit slawischem Blut stattgefunden, bei den anderen mit keltischen, romanischen und

<sup>25</sup> See Andrew Barker, *Telegrams from the Soul. Peter Altenberg and the Culture of fin-de-siècle Vienna*. Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1996, pp. 63-74.

<sup>26</sup> Olga Wohlbrück, 'Russische Schönheit' in *Die Woche*, 15 October 1904, pp. 1882-5.

<sup>27</sup> A collage in *Der Welt Spiegel*, 8 December 1904.

<sup>28</sup> Jarno Jessen, 'Angelsächsische Frauenschönheit' in *Die Woche*, 20 August 1904, pp. 1507-11.

<sup>29</sup> M.B., 'Schöne Frauen I. Wienerinnen' in *Der Welt Spiegel*, 21 July 1907.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Tiedemann, 'Spanische Frauengestalten' in *Die Woche*, 19 June 1909, pp. 1063-7.

<sup>31</sup> Jarno Jessen, 'Angelsächsische Frauenschönheit', p. 1507.

<sup>32</sup> Hans Bethge, 'Die Spanierin', pp. 129-32 in *Die Erde*, no. 6, December 1912, p. 129.

italienischen, sowie südslawischen Elementen'.<sup>33</sup> Thus, for the Austrian-Jewish author Karl Emil Franzos, in his travelogue *Aus Anhalt und Thüringen* (1903), the racial beauty of the women of Thuringia reflects their Teutonic-Slavic mixture:

Die Hübschesten waren zwei blutjunge Dinger, die ich bei Katzhütte traf; sie sahen so verschieden aus, wie Kaukasier überhaupt untereinander sein können. Die eine schlank, blondhaarig, blauäugig, mit einem schmalen Gesicht, die andere klein, Aug und Haare schwarz, das Gesicht rundlich und breit wie die Gestalt. So verbildlichten sie mir zugleich sehr angenehm die beiden Menschentypen des Tals, deren Grenzlinie etwa der Katzebach ist; von dort bis über Goldisthal hinauf sitzt der kleinere schwarze, abwärts aber bis zur Mündung der längere blonde Schlag. Mischlinge zwischen Deutschen und Slawen sind sicherlich beide, nur schlägt bei den Blonden das germanische, bei den Schwarzen das slawische Blut mehr durch [...]<sup>34</sup>

From the 1890s onward, this fascination with racial beauty and racial nuances is also apparent in the work of German artists, Franz Stuck and Emil Nolde in particular. Between 1890 and 1915, Stuck often chose women of foreign ethnicity as subjects for sumptuous, exoticist portraits, including 'Ägypterin' (1896, fig. 29), 'Japanerin' (ca. 1896, fig. 30), 'Italienerin' (ca. 1900, fig. 31), 'Römerin' (1901, fig. 32), an 'Ungarin' (1901, fig. 33), a 'Junge Ägypterin' (1912, fig. 34) and a 'Griechin' (ca. 1913, fig. 35). As if tapping into the preoccupation with racial nuances, Stuck also painted a blonde, Teutonic-looking Northern Italian woman for his 'Florentinerin' (1901, fig. 36) – his Roman and other Italian women are dark-complexioned – and a distinctly Latin-looking Southern German woman with dark curls for his 'Bildnis einer Mainzerin' (ca. 1914, fig. 37).

Though painting in an entirely different style, Emil Nolde also created numerous portraits emphasising the aesthetic quality of racial traits, which include 'Zigeunermädchen' (1899, fig. 38), 'Italienerkinder' (1905, fig. 39), 'Schwarzes Weib' (1910, fig. 40), 'Hindukopf' (1911, fig. 41), a pair of decadent-looking 'Slowenen' (1911, fig. 42), a blond 'Wiking' (1912, fig. 43), two sloe-eyed, yellow-skinned 'Gelbe Akte' (1912, fig. 44), a 'Mulattin' (1913, fig. 45), and a 'Polnisches Mädchen' (1914, fig. 46) with stereotypically Slavic, wide cheeks and sloe eyes. A trip to the South Seas via Russia and East Asia also inspired Nolde to paint numerous portraits of Siberians and South Sea Islanders, often with interesting racial features, such as an 'Eingeborener mit rotem Haar' (1914, fig. 47).

<sup>33</sup> Albert Friedenthal, *Das Weib im Leben der Völker*, vol. 2. Berlin: Verlaganstalt für Litteratur und Kunst, 1911, p. 509.

<sup>34</sup> Karl Emil Franzos, *Aus Anhalt und Thüringen*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2000, pp. 281-2.



The tradition of racial portraiture was also carried on by the Munich-trained Russian artist Alexander von Jawlensky, particularly in the years 1911-1913, as the following female portraits testify: 'Russin' (1911, fig. 48), 'Spanierin' (ca. 1911, fig. 49), 'Französin' (1912, fig. 50), 'Asiatin' (1912, fig. 51), 'Die Mazedonierin' (1912, fig. 52), 'Frau aus Turkestan' (1912, fig. 53), 'Die Griechin' (1913, fig. 54), 'Ägypterin' (1913, fig. 55) and 'Sizilianerin' (1913, fig. 56). At this point, something remarkable becomes apparent. While French artists of the day exhibited a particular fascination with one sort of racial beauty – such as Gauguin with his golden-tinted Samoans and Matisse with his Moroccans – the fascination with overall racial variety seems to have been a phenomenon peculiar to northern artists.

### **The Nature of Racial Attraction**

The turn-of-the-century German preoccupation with racial variety also spawned a new sort of love story. Starting with Thomas Mann and Marie Madeleine, racial appearance plays a central role in the attraction of one character to another. Suffice to say that Thomas Mann rarely wrote about a purebred German's love for another purebred German. However, it is usually not as simple as a purebred German's love for a purebred Italian either. In Mann's *Der Wille zum Glück*, Paolo Hoffmann, who is part South American and part German, finds his life's fulfilment in his love for an approximate racial equivalent, the aforementioned half-Jewish Ada Stein. In *Tristan*, the dark and presumably Jewish Detlev Spinell is infatuated with the pale Teuton Gabriele Klöterjahn. In *Tonio Kröger*, the title figure, half-Latin and half-German by race and of dark, Latin looks, yearns for the blond beauty of the thoroughly Teutonic Hans Hansen and his female equivalent, Ingeborg Holm, 'die blonde Inge'. In *Königliche Hoheit*, the German prince Klaus Heinrich is beguiled by the charms of the 'Quinterone' Imma Spoelmann. Klaus Heinrich falls in love with Imma upon seeing her dark, exotic figure stubbornly make its way through a column of Teutonic, blond soldiers – an image that he turns over in his mind for a while afterwards: 'Laß das noch einmal sehen, wie sie so schwarzbleich und fremdartig durch die Gasse der blonden Soldaten ging.'<sup>35</sup> In *Wälsungenblut*, a Jewish brother and sister of markedly Semitic appearance make love to one another, spiting the blond gentile who would marry into the family. In *Der Tod in Venedig*, the ageing Gustav von Aschenbach, of Slavic admixture on his mother's side, falls for the young

Polish Adonis, Tadzio, and thus fatally collapses into his feminine, Slavic and Dionysian side. Finally, in *Der Zauberberg*, the blond Hamburger Hans Castorp is beguiled by the Asiatic sloe eyes of the Russian Clawdia Chauchat, who reminds him of his childhood infatuation, a similarly sloe-eyed boy of Slavic extraction. Thus, Mann rehashes the scenario of *Tonio Kröger*, with the protagonist's life-long fascination for a particular racial type. Astonishingly, all of these racially contingent infatuations are the central plot vehicles in their respective stories.

In more subtle ways, Eduard von Keyserling also used race as a catalyst for romance in his work. In *Die dritte Stiege*, Lothar von Brückmann, the son of a German aristocrat and a déclassé Polish chanteuse, develops a problematic attraction to a dark and savage Croatian woman of the proletariat. In *Beate und Mareile*, the half-Italian, half-Prussian aristocrat Günther von Tarniff attempts unsuccessfully to settle down with a pretty, inbred Prussian woman of the nobility after years of sowing his oats among the women of Southern Europe. In *Nicky*, a Brazilian aesthete with a German mother attempts to woo a married German woman into the role of a motherly lover. In *Fürstinnen*, an ageing, unmarried German count, who spent his childhood infatuated with the dark, mysterious Jewish girl from across the street, finds a final solace in his requited love for a dark and earthy girl of German and Italian stock. In one scene, the mother of this girl, hoping to marry her to the count, gives tantalising mention to her racial background.<sup>36</sup>

### **A Piquant Blood Mixture: *Maria Fortunata* (1918)**

In Madeleine's work, which shimmers with cruel Russian ladies, earthy Latin women and their hapless, blond Teutonic lovers, race plays more of a central role in attraction than anywhere else. Exemplary is the scenario of the short story *Maria Fortunata* (1918), which chronicles the erotic adventure of Arno Helmstadt, a young German artist, in the fictional San Angelo, a sleepy town on the Italian Riviera where he is sojourning for health reasons. Here he encounters Maria Fortunata, a young and naïve Italian marquise who was born to a bourgeois family in Milan. When Helmstadt first sees Maria, he has no great interest in her. Helmstadt likes stylish women and Maria is 'sehr unelegant in dem schwarzvollenenen Kleide, das die

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas Mann, *Königliche Hoheit*, p. 233.

<sup>36</sup> See Eduard von Keyserling, *Fürstinnen in Harmonie*. Munich: Knauer, 1998, p. 795.

Umrisse ihrer hochgewachsenen Figur nicht erkennen ließ'.<sup>37</sup> Her face, under her heavy black hair, has 'angenehme aber unbedeutende Züge' (p. 43). Only the blue eyes are surprising in her otherwise calm and unremarkable face: 'Ja, fast erschreckend wirkten diese großen, tiefblauen Augen mit ihrem Blick voll wilder Angst' (ibid.).

Nonetheless, as is natural in a Marie Madeleine story, the otherwise blasé Helmstadt soon develops an erotic fascination for the young marquise. When Arno sees Maria for a second time, the harmonious contrast between light and dark in her coloration beguiles him:

jetzt erst sah er, wie viele einander widersprechende Reize sie besaß, die doch ein harmonisches Ganzes bildeten. Ihre blauen Augen und ihre weiße Haut, die Zeichen, die auf eine helle Blondine zu deuten schienen, wirkten doppelt so reizvoll unter den nachtschwarzen Haaren, die in metallisch schimmernden Wellen anstiegen und im Nacken in einen wuchtigen Knoten zusammengekommen waren. (p. 54)

This in turn leads Helmstadt to fantasise about the racial basis of Maria's interesting colour combination. From this point on he is infatuated:

Sie hatte ein schönes Gesicht, – nun ja! – der nordisch helle Teint und die südlich dunklen Haare waren eine Eigentümlichkeit, die man eben in Ober-Italien, so um Mailand herum, mitunter fand. Kennzeichen einer Mischrasse. 'Seit altersher ist viel deutsches Blut in der Gegend', überlegte er. (p. 55)

Helmstadt, it seems, is fascinated by the idea of finding Teutonic blood, his own blood, in a female inhabitant of the Mediterranean world. In the case of Northern Italy, this idea is not based entirely on fantasy, considering the long legacy of barbarian conquerors after the fall of Rome, particularly the Lombards. Driven southward by other barbarians, this fierce Teutonic people settled in and around Milan, from where they held sway over all of Northern Italy. They promptly intermarried with the local Roman population and soon lost their native, Germanic tongue. By the eighth century, as the historian Ferdinand Lot writes: 'le mélange de sang par les mariages mixtes ne permet probablement pas de distinguer physiquement le grand seigneur d'origine germanique et des indigènes italiens'.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, German scholars of the turn of the century, particularly of the chauvinistic sort, never tired of looking for leftover traces of Teutonic peoples in Northern Italy and in other former barbarian kingdoms, such as Spain or Northern Africa, once ruled by the Goths and the Vandals respectively. A passage from Johannes Ranke's *Der Mensch*

<sup>37</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Maria Fortunata* in *Der Liebe Regenbogen*, Leipzig: B. Elischer, 1918, p. 43

<sup>38</sup> Ferdinand Lot, *La fin du monde antique et le début du moyen âge*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1968, p. 321.

(1912) gives us a feel for this bizarre, romantic and rather fruitless quest, which attracted scholars from other European countries as well:

Von den südlichen und westlichen Wanderungen der germanischen Stämme während der Völkerwanderungszeit ist trotz all der Reiche, die Ost- und Westgoten, Vandalen, Sueven und Langobarden, Franken und Angelsachsen errichtet haben, nichts rein Deutsches übriggeblieben. In den meisten der Länder, welche diese Reiche umfassen, suchen wir in der jetzigen Bevölkerung vergeblich nach Spuren unserer Landsleute, und in den wenigen, wo sie unzweifelhaft noch vorhanden sind, erfordert es ein besonderes Studium, um sie, wie es Telesforo de Aranzadi in gewissen Gebirgsdistrikten Spaniens z.B. neuerdings gelungen ist, aus der Umwicklung vieler anderer Stämme herauszuschälen. In Tunisien zeigen sich nach R. Collignon blonde Haare und blaue Augen nur ganz vereinzelt, und beachtenswerterweise fanden sich unter 2000 untersuchten 'ansässigen' Tunesiern helle Haar- und helle Augenfarbe niemals an dem gleichen Individuum vereinigt.<sup>39</sup>

Regarding Italy, which has always played a special role in the German psyche, one scholar, Ludwig Woltmann (1871-1907), went so far as to write a book about the supposedly Teutonic racial heritage of the Italian Renaissance. In *Die Germanen und die Renaissance in Italien* (1905), Woltmann endeavours to prove that that the greatest Italian artists and thinkers of this period could all trace their ancestry back to the Teutonic conquerors of the late antiquity.<sup>40</sup> He investigates the etymology of their surnames, scrutinises scant biographical material and even analyses their portraits for clues as to their racially contingent features. The book consolidates a series of articles that Woltmann wrote for his journal, *Die politisch-anthropologische Revue*, such as 'Der physische Typus Raffaels'<sup>41</sup> or 'War Dante blond oder brünett?'<sup>42</sup>

Woltmann's conception of Aryan blood as responsible for high civilisation paralleled that of Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Gobineau, both of whom linked prehistoric Aryan invasions with the rise of culture in India, Greece and Rome. Many theorists, starting with Gobineau, were particularly keen on attempting to demonstrate that the ancient Greeks were originally pale, blond and blue-eyed. For instance, Ludwig Wilser compared naked Swedes on horseback on a series of modern paintings to the Greek warriors on a frieze of the Parthenon: 'auf beiden Kunstwerken ist ja die gleiche Rasse dargestellt, im Süden nach kurzer, aber um so

<sup>39</sup> Johannes Ranke, *Der Mensch*, vol. 2. Leipzig & Vienna: Bibliographisches Institut, 1912, p. 242.

<sup>40</sup> Ludwig Woltmann, *Die Germanen und die Renaissance in Italien*. Leipzig: Thüringische Verlagsanstalt, 1905.

<sup>41</sup> Ludwig Woltmann, 'Der physische Typus Raffaels' in *Die politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1904, pp. 171-6.

<sup>42</sup> Ludwig Woltmann, 'War Dante blond oder brünett' in *Die politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 3, no. 9, 1904, pp. 549-52.

herrlicher Blüte wieder ausgestorben, im Norden, ihrer uralten Heimat, noch heute frisch und lebenskräftig'.<sup>43</sup> The theme of blond, Greek *Rassenschönheit* also recurs in such articles for the *Politisch-anthropologische Revue* as 'Blonde Haare und blaue Augen bei den Griechen'<sup>44</sup> or 'Homers Helden und Götter',<sup>45</sup> in which Otto Hauser endeavours to prove the predominantly Aryan appearance of Homeric characters.

Stratz also dabbled in this particular brand of romanticism and even felt inclined to point out the following in regards to the Italian male's purported taste for blondes:

Darin ist er nun allerdings sehr vaterlandsliebend, dass er nicht der ausländischen, sondern der italienischen Blondine den höchsten Preis zuerkennt; er vergisst aber dabei, dass er auch seine italienischen Blondinen nur früheren Einflüssen der nordischen Rasse zu danken hat, deren Blut noch heute in der italienischen Bevölkerung, namentlich im Norden, fortlebt. (p. 278)

Stratz then demonstrates 'eine derartige blonde Variation italienischer Schönheit' (ibid.) with the photo of a nude, blond woman from Milan (fig. 17). To his credit, Stratz seems to temporarily abandon his theory of Nordic superiority when he goes on to say that the most beautiful Italian women are those of purely Italian features. Later, in analysing the photo of a blonde Spanish girl, Stratz also declares 'dass wir auf nordisches Blut schliessen dürfen, das in glücklicher Mischung mit dem romanischen Vorzüge beider Rassen in einem Körper vereinigt hat' (p. 258).

As Mann's *Königliche Hoheit* and Madeleine's *Der Tölpel* (1918), another short story in *Der Liebe Regenbogen*, also demonstrate, the German romanticisation of racial vestiges was not necessarily confined to the Teutonic. In Madeleine's *Der Tölpel*, which also takes place in 'San Angelo', the hapless Italian protagonist's love object, a pretty but very poor girl named Santina, can trace her ancestry back to handsome, Moorish pirates who plundered the Ligurian coast. Regarding Santina's family line, the narrator states: 'Und durch die Jahrhunderte hindurch triumphierte die Rasse des maurischen Stammvatters, des Seeräubers; wie aus einer Form gegossen waren diese sieben schmalen, braunen Gesichter'.<sup>46</sup> Santina has a 'schmales, edles Gesicht' (p. 133), while her father is known as 'der Maure' (p. 141)

<sup>43</sup> Ludwig Wilser, 'Altgriechische und schwedische Reitertypen' in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 6, no. 5, 1907, p. 346.

<sup>44</sup> Anon., 'Blonde Haare und blaue Augen bei den Griechen' in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 3, no. 6, 1904, p. 393.

<sup>45</sup> Otto Hauser, 'Homers Helden und Götter' in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1908, pp. 156-7.

<sup>46</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Der Tölpel* in *Der Liebe Regenbogen*, p. 141.

and possesses a ‘feingeschnitten[es] Gesicht mit [...] arabisch feurigen Augen’ (p. 145). Once again, we find a corresponding passage in *Die Rassenschönheit des Weibes*, when Stratz comments on the beauty of women from Southern Spain: ‘Vielleicht ist diese auffallende Schönheit südspanischer Form auf eine frühere Kreuzung mit maurischem Blute zurückzuführen’.<sup>47</sup> In the end, the characters Maria Fortunata and Santina make up a sort of complementary pair, both of them representing attractive ‘barbarian’ blood – from the North in Maria Fortunata’s case and from the South in Santina’s case. Thus, Madeleine portrays her ‘San Angelo’ as a romantic racial crossroads.

Racial attraction functions as a plot vehicle throughout Madeleine’s work. In *Das Sündenkind* (1908), a French mother ends up loathing her degenerate Latin husband and eldest son to favour her blond youngest, the product of an affair with a Swedish officer. In *Kriemhilde* (1913), an ageing count of sloe-eyed, Slavic extraction cherishes his young, blonde and thoroughly Teutonic wife. In *Dichterliebe* (1918), a young Parisian aesthete infatuated with artifice learns to appreciate nature in a fling with a dark, earthy girl from the Provence. We will explore these stories in greater depth in the chapters to come.

### **Racial Psychology in the Symbolist, Decadent and Nietzschean Traditions**

As indicated above, the portrayal of racial psychology – consistent with the portrayal of racial appearance – often took on a decorative aspect in turn-of-the-century European culture. It also played a frequently symbolic role in the artistic, literary and philosophical works of the day. Different racial personalities come to represent different aspects of the overall human personality or different societal trends. For an archetypal example of the symbolism of racial personality, we need look no further than to a painting by the French Symbolist painter Gustav Moreau, whose work would later exercise a profound influence on the decadent culture that inspired Marie Madeleine’s work. ‘Les Rois Mages’, painted in the 1860s (fig. 57), portrays the three magi as effeminate young men, virtually women, who each represent one of the three primary races of mankind – White, Yellow and Black – as understood by Gobineau as well as his precursors and followers. We might regard it as the three magi as *Rassenschönheiten*, except that the racial personality of the three

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<sup>47</sup> Stratz, *Die Rassenschönheit des Weibes*, p. 256.



'kings' is more important than their physical appearance. Moreau himself explained his painting as follows:

Les trois rois sont représentés par trois figures d'un caractère absolument tranché. La race blanche par un jeune roi rappelant dans son ajustement, son type et son caractère d'expression un saint Louis jeune, figure toute de joie, d'ardeur intérieure et de dignité royale. La race jaune (cuivrée) représentée par une figure féminine de jeune roi indien, type tout oriental de rêverie sensuelle et de fatalisme, c'est un roi-poète tenant la fleur mystique dans une somnolence songeuse. La race noire, enfin, sous la figure d'un jeune roi nègre, a conservé son caractère enfantin et naïf, figure souriante, toujours curieuse, toute de dehors et par le geste et par l'expression de la physionomie. Ces trois types sont, par leur caractère psychologique, la synthèse de l'âme de l'humanité.<sup>48</sup>

Moreau's portrayal of the white race as joyful, noble and inwardly fervent and of the Asian race as sensual and fatalistic corresponds to portrayals in many of the German literary works we will explore.

That the symbolism of racial typology played an integral role in the aesthetics of decadence right from its inception is also apparent in Paul Bourget's essay of 1881 on Baudelaire. Here Bourget maintains that the races of Europe – the Slavs, Teutons and Latins – each have their own way of expressing the melancholy, the 'nausée universelle' of the age: 'Elle se manifeste chez les premiers par le nihilisme, chez les seconds par le pessimisme, chez nous-mêmes par de solitaires et bizarres névroses'.<sup>49</sup> Bourget's particular conceptions regarding each race also echoes throughout Madeleine's work, especially when it comes to the Slavic and Latin peoples, since, in the triumphant and vainglorious German mindset of the decades following the Franco-Prussian war, decadence was often conceived of as something racially foreign.

In the work of Nietzsche, the philosophical icon for so many German decadents, the races and racial mixtures of Europe become emblematic of all sorts of societal ills and societal benefits, particularly with connotations of decay or regeneration. As we will observe in later chapters, one race in the work of Nietzsche is likely to take on differing, even mutually exclusive connotations. The French, for instance, are both maligned as an old and decadent race and hailed as a race blessed by continual refreshment from Mediterranean blood.<sup>50</sup> Nietzsche's associative, intuitive approach to race, which ultimately owes much to Gobineau, would also

<sup>48</sup> cited by Geneviève Lacambre, *Gustav Moreau. Maître sorcier*. Paris: Gallimard, 1997, p. 100.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Bourget, 'Charles Baudelaire' in *Essais de Psychologie contemporaine*, vol. 1. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1931, p. 13.

<sup>50</sup> This will be addressed in greater detail in chapter six.

resound more jingoistically in the work of Julius Langbehn and the now forgotten Heinrich Driesmans.

### **Sensuality, Foreign Blood and the Mixed-Race Decadent Type**

One of the most important manifestations of racial psychology in turn-of-the-century Germany is the sometimes chauvinist, often playful association of non-Teutonic race, either on its own or mixed with Teutonic racial elements, with sensuality. In the work of Madeleine and her contemporaries, one finds that the most sensual personages – sensual in the sense of artistically inclined, erotically inclined, and otherwise preoccupied with sensations – have at least some non-Teutonic racial background. Again, Gobineau's legacy is unmistakable. A central tenet of his philosophy is that sensuality is absent in the Aryan race in its purest, long-extinct form, whereas it is pronounced in the two other primary races, the African and the Mongoloid: 'L'immense supériorité des blancs, dans le domaine entier de l'intelligence, s'associe à une infériorité non moins marquée dans l'intensité des sensations. Le blanc est beaucoup moins doué que le noir et que le jaune sous le rapport sensuel' (p. 342). In the post-Gobineauian, German literary consciousness of the turn of the century, any significantly non-Teutonic character was therefore likely to become a colourful representative of the realm of the senses.

Of course, the German conception of Southern and Eastern Europeans as more sensual than themselves goes back well before the dawn of racial theory. Italy in particular has long exercised a profound fascination in German consciousness as a land of sensuality, with its warm climate, lush landscape, *joie de vivre* and artistic tradition awakening the senses of German writers such as Goethe or Eichendorff. Italian Catholicism, with its tendency towards idolatry and superstition, further contributed to the German conception of the Italians as sensual. Such was also the case regarding the Catholic and Orthodox Slavs. In the Prussian mindset, Slavs, along with their neighbours, the Balts, were also associated with outright polytheism. The Slavs converted relatively late and the Balts even later. Indeed, the Teutonic Knights, the founders of German Prussia, were originally Crusaders of the Holy Land who were sent to Northeastern Europe in order to convert the Balts by force. Eduard von Keyserling and Marie Madeleine both grew up in such regions colonised by Germans, in a milieu where Germanness still meant morality, order and restraint,

whereas Slavicness and Balticness conjured up images of open, pagan sensuality in the minds, at least, of the German settlers.

With the rise of racial theory in the mid-nineteenth century, the pagan sensuality of the Southern or Eastern European gradually went from being a cultural trait, associated with a particular civilisation, such as Italy or Poland, to a primarily racial trait, thought to characterise all Latin and Slavic peoples. One had sensual inclinations not because one grew up Catholic in Poland but because one had Slavic blood. One could even grow up in the middle of Germany but would still be haunted by one's sensual, non-Teutonic, racial heritage. As we will examine in the next chapter, non-Teutonic sensuality was thought to characterise many ethnic groups within the German-speaking world, from the Jews, to the 'part-Slavic' Berliners or Viennese, to the 'part-Latin' Rhinelanders. In the literature of the day, any German character with a foreign, non-Teutonic parent or grandparent is likely to be portrayed as more sensual than the average German.

This is particularly the case regarding the racially mixed artist, dandy or aesthete, one of the great, recurrent figures in the German literature of the turn of the century. At this time, the artistic personality was thought to result from the admixture of sober, Teutonic blood with other, more sensual racial elements, the latter providing acute sensations, the former the ability to work them coherently into art. Gobineau believed that a highly diluted admixture of non-Aryan blood was essential for any significant, artistic creativity, though he felt that it led to simultaneously led to degeneracy.<sup>51</sup> Such racial dynamics are familiar to readers of Thomas Mann, whose decadent artist figures are all of mixed-race background, whether the part-South American Paolo Hoffmann of *Der Wille zum Glück*, the part-Latin protagonist of *Tonio Kröger* or the part-Slavic Gustav von Aschenbach of *Der Tod in Venedig*. Of Aschenbach, Mann writes:

rascheres, sinnlicheres Blut war der Familie in der vorigen Generation durch die Mutter des Dichters, Tochter eines böhmischen Kapellmeisters, zugekommen. Von ihr stammten die Merkmale fremder Rasse in seinem Äußern. Die Vermählung dienstlich nüchterner Gewissenhaftigkeit mit dunkleren, feurigen Impulsen ließ einen Künstler und diesen besonderen Künstler erstehen.<sup>52</sup>

Even in *Buddenbrooks* (1901), the French-Swiss blood of a distant foremother seems to be implicated in the descent of the Lübeck family into art and decadence,

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<sup>51</sup> See Gobineau, *Essai*, p. 343.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig* in *Sämtliche Erzählungen*, p. 358.

culminating with the sickly and fanciful Hanno, whose dark features stand out 'stets ein wenig fremdartig unter den hellblonden stahlblauäugigen, skandinavischen Typen seiner Kameraden hervor'.<sup>53</sup> Himself of mixed German-Brazilian heritage, Mann was certainly well equipped to take on such topics. Nowadays, we would merely say that the experience of foreignness was close to his heart. But contemporaries of Thomas Mann were liable to analyse his artistic personality on the same racial terms Mann himself laid out in his prose. In 'Thomas Mann, Versuch einer Deutung' (1925), for instance, Ida Boy-Ed claims that 'Thomas Manns Dichtungen mehr von dem romanischen Teil seines Wesens bestimmt sind'<sup>54</sup> and moreover describes his preference for decadent themes as follows:

Mischblut hat seine besonderen biochemischen Merkmale. Und es unterliegt wohl keinem Zweifel, daß der Zuschuß vom Blut einer altersmüden, übererfahrenen Rasse zu seinem Germanenblut Thomas Mann jene unheimlich scharfe Beobachtungskunst für das Mürbe, Zerfallende gegeben hat. (pp. 171-2)

Mann, however, was by no means the only turn-of-the-century German author to wander into this territory, particularly when it came to the popular fiction of the day. Maria Janitschek's half-German, half-Provençal dandy Geo Weidmann of *Land!* (1897) drifts through Germany, France and India looking for spiritual enlightenment. Wedekind's ultra-decadent charlatan protagonist of *Der Marquis von Keith* (1900) is part-Gypsy. Oskar A.H. Schmitz's eccentric aesthete Count Vittorio Alta-Carrara of *Haschisch* (1903) is the product of a Calabrian father and a Norwegian mother. Eduard von Keyserling also took a particular interest in such issues, as unlikely as it may seem in light of his own background. A tall, blond and undeniably plain-looking member of the Baltic-German nobility, Keyserling appeared, if anything, to be more of a stereotyped inbred northerner than a mixed-race dandy – his friend Korfiz Holm, for instance, felt he exhibited 'Zeichen von Überzüchtung und Degeneration'.<sup>55</sup> But looks can be deceiving. Keyserling's nephew Otto von Taube verified that a distant foremother on Keyserling's maternal side was Italian. This may seem inconsequential nowadays, but as late as 1954, Taube considered it a suitable explanation for the 'Atavismus' of Keyserling's artistic impulses.<sup>56</sup> Whether Keyserling would have

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks. Verfall einer Familie*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1922, p. 522.

<sup>54</sup> Ida Boy-Ed, 'Thomas Mann, Versuch einer Deutung' in *Eine Auswahl von Peter de Mendelssohn*. Lübeck: Verlag der Buchhandlung Gustav Weiland Nachf., 1975, p. 176.

<sup>55</sup> Korfiz Holm, *ich – kleingeschrieben*. Munich: Langen, 1932, p. 197.

<sup>56</sup> Otto Freiherr von Taube, 'Nachwort', pp. 317-35 in Eduard von Keyserling, *Schwüle Tage und andere Erzählungen*. New York: Fischer, 1954, p. 320.

agreed with this racial analysis of his talent is questionable but it is clear that he too was swept up by the romanticism of foreign racial admixture. Among the most interesting examples of Keyserling's prolific prose writing between 1903 and 1918 are three novellas that focus on seductive, decadent characters of mixed German and Latin heritage and two novellas that include half-Polish aesthetes. That Keyserling himself was not averse to racial interpretations of artistic talent is apparent in his essay on his Munich friend Max Halbe from 1906: 'Niederdeutsches und polnisches Blut mischen sich in ihm, und das mag seinem Wesen das Gespannte und Gegensätzliche geben, das wie die notwendige Vorbedingung für die Eigenart seines Talents erscheint'.<sup>57</sup>

Nietzsche, of course, was the first German to give voice to the idea of the mixed-race decadent. In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886), he wrote vaguely but prophetically of the 'Nervenschwäche und Kränklichkeit' as well as the 'Unruhe, Störung und Zweifel' that arise 'wenn sich in entscheidender und plötzlicher Weise lang voneinander abgetrennte Rassen oder Stände kreuzen'.<sup>58</sup> By 1901, the racial theorist Heinrich Driesmans stated more definitively: 'Künstlerisches Wesen pflegt das Ergebnis einer Blutmischung zu sein, die um so verheißungsvoller ist, je gegensätzlicher das Blut war, welches sich in einem Individuum vermischt hat'.<sup>59</sup> In his *Die Wahlverwandtschaften der deutschen Blutmischung* (1901), Driesmans even argues that a person inherits a racially based emotional constitution from his mother and a racially based mind from his father. Thus, he conceived of a whole spectrum of racial personality types, with the Teutonic, Slavic and 'Keltoromanisch' (i.e. Latin) races functioning as the foundational elements, the primary colours of the European racial palate. Driesmans felt that artists were virtually always of Germanic and Latin descent, with the Latin descent on the mother's side.<sup>60</sup> This is indeed the exact racial mixture of Thomas and Heinrich Mann – and of the former's artist-characters Paolo Hoffmann and Tonio Kröger – though Driesman's theory does not seem to hold up to any other well-known German artists, fictional or non-fictional, of the day.

<sup>57</sup> Eduard von Keyserling, 'Max Halbe', pp. 1068-70 in *Über Land und Meer*, vol. 96, no. 44, 1906, p. 1070.

<sup>58</sup> Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* in *Werke in drei Bänden*, vol. 2, pp. 670-1.

<sup>59</sup> Heinrich Driesmans, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften der deutschen Blutmischung. Der Kulturgeschichte der Rasseninstinkte zweiter Teil*. Leipzig: Eugen Diederichs, 1901, p. 159.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, p. 173.



### **A Creole Aesthete: Baron Herlitz of *Pygmalion* (1913)**

The conception of the artist or dandy-aesthete as a racial mixture is not as central to Marie Madeleine's work as it is to Mann's or Keyserling's but it nonetheless surfaces on several notable occasions. The best example is the short story *Pygmalion* (1913), Madeleine's own kitsch version of the Ovidian myth, which, curiously, was being reworked at exactly the same time into a play by George Bernard Shaw. In Madeleine's story, we are introduced to Erich Herlitz, a rich and handsome baron who lives in a Berlin villa furnished with 'Kostbarkeiten aus aller Herren Länder'.<sup>61</sup> Herlitz has no ambitions in life other than to enjoy refined beauty and cultivate refined taste. We recognise a classic decadent aesthete, exemplified in the character Des Esseintes of J.K. Huysmans's *À rebours* (1884) and further popularised by Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). In keeping with the German, literary tradition of the aesthete, Herlitz has an exotic racial background; his mother was a 'Kreolin' (p. 54). Since Herlitz's 'schmale[s] und blaßbraune[s]' (p. 55) face has been endowed with the 'eigenartigen Reiz' (p. 60) of his Creole mother, we can assume that she was a Creole with native blood or that she was at least of non-Teutonic European descent.

Like other decadent aesthetes before him, Erich comes to the conclusion that people can function as *objets d'art* just as well as anything else. He ends up employing Agnes, a beautiful, young woman from the proletarian classes, as a decorative object, a 'blonde[n] Kunstgegenstand' (p. 64) for his villa in Berlin, after he spots her one evening dancing at a cabaret. As Baron Herlitz tells his baffled friend Palmann, a German bourgeois: 'Mir kam der Gedanke, wie hübsch es sein müßte, dieser Schönheit den Rahmen zu geben, der ihr gebührt, – welch ein Genuß das sein könnte, dieses schöne Mädchen wie ein schönes Bild in meinem Hause zu haben' (p. 66).

Herlitz, it should be noted, has no overt sexual interest in Agnes. He has certainly led a life of considerable debauchery, but as far as Agnes is concerned, Herlitz intends to exercise merely the artistic side of his non-Teutonic sensuality. He provides Agnes with luxurious jewellery and clothing according to his own refined tastes and then simply has her lounge about his villa, so that he can gaze at her from time to time, as he would gaze at a beautiful statue. For instance, at one point in June, Agnes wears a dress that Herlitz calls 'den Junitraum' (p. 78), so that she captures the



essence of the time of year, like an art nouveau picture by Alphonse Mucha. At the most, Herlitz strokes Agnes' hair or places a kiss on her forehead, just as he does with his prized greyhounds. She is not allowed to leave the estate and Herlitz has even forbidden her to speak, as her proletarian chatter clashes with the image of unadulterated ethereal beauty that he would like to savour. This may seem cruel but as Herlitz says, 'ihre Gefühle interessieren mich gar nicht' (p. 70).

Here, as elsewhere, we observe the dynamics of racially contingent attraction. Herlitz's relationship to Agnes becomes a revision of his insufficient relationship to his Creole mother, who was emotionally distant. As Herlitz tells his friend Palmann, 'Mama kümmerte sich gar nicht um mich' (p. 54). She spent both summer and winter in a *chaiselongue* next to the fireplace, eating bonbons and complaining about the cold. Agnes, as a chatty, blond and blue-eyed woman of the German *Volk* with a 'Körper aus Bleichsucht und Schnee' (p. 64), represents the polar opposite of his warm-blooded and yet cold-hearted mother. In a Freudian twist, Herlitz repeats the scenario of his childhood by having Agnes lounge about idly while maintaining an emotional distance from her, even as Agnes falls in love with him. He is now the source, rather than the victim of emotional abandonment, and in the end, Agnes commits suicide.

### **Madeleine's Sensual Women of Mixed Race**

In Marie Madeleine's work, non-Teutonic racial admixture is more frequently an issue in regards to the erotic rather than artistic side of sensuality; erotic women of mixed non-Teutonic background are much more common than the mixed-race artist or aesthete. This was something of a Marie Madeleine speciality and it is perhaps one of the most fascinating aspects of Madeleine's prolific prose writing and her considerable success. In including such characters in her work – as protagonists or at least as vehicles for erotic scenarios – she renders it not only doubly piquant but also appropriate for more conservative German readership. A portrait of a sexually liberated Franco-Russian or Anglo-Indian *femme fatale* was certainly disconcerting for Germans of the day, particularly coming from a woman, but could not have raised eyebrows like an equivalent, thoroughbred German character. On the contrary, it may have offered repressed, racially conscious readers a quick outlet for their fantasies of both the erotic and the exotic while seeming to confirm their sense of Teutonic moral

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<sup>61</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Pygmalion in Küssen*. Leipzig: Elischer, 1913, p. 61.

superiority all the more. Sensual characters in Madeleine's work are almost always non-Teutonic but if they do happen to be Teutons, they are inevitably decadent inbred aristocrats – something which we will explore in greater depth in the next chapter. Thus, ironically, like many German authors since Gustav Freytag, Madeleine was already participating in Germany's increasingly *völkisch* tendencies, which would ultimately hail the German common man as the purest, healthiest Aryan and hence the least sensual of all peoples. For Madeleine, however, this was not a conscious, political scheme but rather an aesthetic enterprise in which non-Teutonic sensuality is romanticised, beautified and, as we will observe in later chapters, classified – for sensuality was thought to be of a different nature depending on the race responsible for it.

On several occasions, however, it is clear that the particular type of foreign, racial admixture is not especially relevant to the story. Rather, it is the piquant intermingling of conflicting racial inclinations – generally the chaste Teutonic with something sensual and non-Teutonic – that provides the basis of the story, which often becomes an ironic exploration of the sexual mores of the day.

### **An Explosive Mix: The Franco-Russian Olga of *Die indische Felsentaube* (1902)**

A year before the publication of *Tonio Kröger*, Madeleine published *Die indische Felsentaube*, her first and most complex portrayal of a sensual, mixed-race female character. Olga Flammberg, née Saint-Pierre, is a young woman of French and Russian parentage, who is married to an ageing German count in Berlin. In this atmosphere of aristocratic, Prussian morality, Olga embodies the improper sensuality of two non-Teutonic races, indeed the two enemy races bordering Germany: France, waiting for reprisal, and Russia, the unstable giant to East. Olga's appearance is exotic, fantastical and perversely attractive, so that we are reminded of the Gobineauian equation of the pre-Aryan races of Europe with fairytale creatures: 'Mit ihren schwarzumschatteten Augen und dem zu roten Mund sah die Gräfin Olga aus wie ein Traumwesen, erzeugt von einer seltsamen und kranken Phantasie'.<sup>62</sup> Next to her much older husband, of good Germanic stock, she looks like 'eine jener geschmeidigen Tropenpflanzen, die einen edlen Baum umklammert halten in

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<sup>62</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die indische Felsentaube*. Bremerhaven: Langerow, 1904, pp. 14-5.

tödlicher Umarmung' (p. 15). Like many of the foreign women Marie Madeleine depicts, Olga is forbiddingly plant-like, a *Jugendstil* sketch in person.

Unsurprisingly, Olga espouses a decadent lifestyle. She enjoys spending some days entirely in bed, and when her husband remarks that this is 'hygienisch nicht richtig', Olga replies,

Ach, – hygienisch [...] davon halte ich garnichts! Was hat man denn von Hygiene? Höchstens, daß man länger lebt. – Und so sehr lange will ich garnicht leben. Meine Eltern sind doch auch zu früh gestorben. Warum sollte ich also alt werden? Und wozu sollte ich hygienisch leben? (p. 18)

Young Olga's libertine philosophy is that, in light of death, one might as well enjoy life to the fullest and forget about duty and conscience. She is particularly preoccupied with death, which provides an odd contrast to her plant-like vitality: 'und es berührte merkwürdig, dieses lebensprühende Geschöpf mit dem leichtsinnigen Lachen so oft vom Sterben sprechen zu hören. Sie kokettierte förmlich mit dem Tode' (p. 20). One might say that Olga unites the fatalism that was considered 'Slavic' with the frivolity that was thought to be 'Latin' and 'French' – both are topoi that, as later chapters will reveal, were central to Marie Madeleine's cosmos.

Olga is also clearly a sensual being in the erotic sense of the word, as is apparent when she dances: 'Es machte ihr unendliches Vergnügen, beim Tanzen fest an eine atmende Männerbrust gedrückt zu werden, und das Sich-Anschmiegen wurde ein förmlicher Sport von ihr' (p. 23). But since Olga is young, inexperienced and also a good flatterer, her husband refrains from taking her sensual inclinations seriously. Olga, however, is not so forgiving. She is obsessed with the idea that her husband had other women before marrying her, and she frequently asks him to talk about his adventures. When Olga succeeds, through begging and whining, in getting some detail from his bachelor years out of him, she rages inside with jealousy. Then she revels masochistically in this jealousy, in the pagan and stereotypically Slavic tendency to enjoy all emotions equally, regardless of whether they are positive or negative: 'Sie aber liebte diese Marter mit der heimlichen, inbrünstigen Liebe, mit der die Märtyrer die Peitsche lieben, die ihnen Wunden schlägt' (p. 33). As a sort of female dandy, Olga revels in nervous excitement in general, something which does not befit her weak constitution (which, since Nietzsche and Thomas Mann, has also been associated with mixed race). As the narrator exclaims: 'Sie liebte doch nichts so

sehr wie Nervenenerregungen! Obwohl ihr dieselben nicht gerade gut bekamen!’ (p. 31).

Olga herself is conscious of the racial basis of her complex personality. As she tells her husband: ‘Bei mir ist es wohl die Racenmischung, die mich dazu gemacht hat. Du weißt doch: Mama war Russin und Papa aus der französischen Kolonie. Da ist es ja gar kein Wunder, daß ich so kompliziert geworden bin’ (p. 13). Such fatalistic considerations of one’s blood mixture seem to have been almost cliché in turn-of-the-century Europe. The racial ponderings of Thomas Mann’s Tonio Kröger or of Heinrich Mann’s Lola in *Zwischen den Rassen* are likely to be familiar to the reader, but this was also a phenomenon that occurred in real life. In a diary entry, Hugo von Hofmannsthal considered whether his problems might go back to the warring elements of his Teutonic-Jewish-Latin blood, while his friend, Leopold von Andrian, expressed a similar ambivalence regarding his own Teutonic-Jewish blood mixture.<sup>63</sup> But perhaps the culmination of this curious fad was when Luise von Toscana, the disgraced former princess of Saxony, declared in her best-selling autobiography *Mein Lebensweg* (1911):

Die Mischung von französischem, italienischem und habsburgischem Blut in meinen Adern hätte jeder etwas eng denkenden Familie ernstliche Bedenken verursachen müssen, ehe sie eines ihrer Mitglieder an die Besitzerin solch eines gemischten Blutes verheiratete [...].<sup>64</sup>

In the case of the former Princess Luise, who ended up fleeing the Saxon court where she had felt isolated and restricted by her husband’s family, mixed blood becomes a proud emblem of her inherently free-spirited nature. Similarly, for the character Olga Flammberg, mixed blood is an emblem of her inherently libertine nature.

The particulars of Olga’s blood make-up are also noteworthy in light of the latest racial theory to appear in Germany at the time. For Heinrich Driesmans, the most dangerous type on his roster of racial combinations was the ‘Slavoromane’, the product of a Slavic mother and a Latin father just like Olga Flammberg (Driesmans put the maternal element first in his racial terms). As Driesmans explains:

Der Slawe ist immerfort ‘geladen’, er gleicht einem Pulver- oder Dynamitfaß, er steckt voller unverarbeiteter gegensätzlicher Kräfte und Gewaltsamkeiten, die nur des auslösenden Funkens harren, um sich zu befreien und die Atmosphäre mit dem Feuer und Getöse ihrer verhaltenen Energien zu erschüttern. Erhält dieses explosive Wesen nun gar einen keltoromanischen

<sup>63</sup> See Jens Rieckmann, ‘Zwischen Bewußtsein und Verdrängung. Hofmannsthals jüdisches Erbe’, pp. 466-83 in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, vol. 67, no. 3, Sept. 1993, pp. 466-7.

<sup>64</sup> Luise von Toscana, *Mein Lebensweg*. Berlin: Continent, 1911, p. 175.

Kopf aufgesetzt ist die Gefahr groß. [...] Wenn die leichten Funken und das Sprühfeuer des französischen Esprit in die explosive slavische Natur fahren, dann giebt es ringsum Brand und Zerstörung. (pp. 187-88)

In particular, Driesmans claims that nihilism is a product of the Slavo-Latin racial mixture and alerts the reader that some of the most attractive women conform to this racial type:

die feingeistigsten, zartesten und schönsten Frauen und Mädchen sind als Nihilistinnen entdeckt worden [...] Wir finden keine andere Deutung, als die [...] daß jene zugleich zarten und energischen, feingeistigen und wilden weiblichen Geschöpfe, die als Nihilistinnen erkannt worden [...] aus der Befruchtung slavischer Frauen durch keltoromanische Männer hervorgegangen sind. (p. 189)

It would be interesting to know whether Marie Madeleine was familiar with this text and whether she created Olga Flammberg, who is certainly an explosive nature ignited by her French esprit – and who also has more than a drop of nihilism in her – with Driesmans's 'Slavoromanin' in mind. But unfortunately, Madeleine left us no record of the books she read.

Tempted by the idea of her husband's experimental youth, Olga eventually carries out her own erotic adventure with Ellernhorst, a young officer in her husband's corps, an uncomplicated blond man, the usual partner for Marie Madeleine's racially exotic women. His physiognomy displays 'zwar viel Race aber wenig Individualität' (p. 42). Olga has a merely sexual interest in the thoroughbred German and feels little regret in her actions. She even considers that Ellernhorst is not the most handsome of men and that she actually finds her elegant, ageing husband more attractive. Still, her sensual, non-Teutonic aspect demands some fun on the side:

Trotzalledem hatte ich für Ellernhorst so ein Gefühl. – ein Gefühl, – nun, auf Deutsch kann man das nicht denken, also: – j'avais envie de lui – –! [...] Mir kommt das so verblüffend einfach vor: man wünscht etwas; – man verwirklicht diesen Wunsch. Als ob ich Appetit auf ein Glas Wein gehabt und es getrunken hätte.... (pp. 54 -55)

Soon enough, their affair comes to light on account of Olga's impropriety and Ellernhorst, unwilling to duel with his commanding officer, commits suicide. Though horrified by the events, Olga remains free of a guilty conscience, contending that she only acted in a way that was natural to her. She is not, however, satisfied with the liberty that the scandal has forced upon her. Rather, she wants to be rejoined with her husband. In the end, she succeeds in winning him back over, proposing that they live together well outside of Berlin, where there would be few erotic temptations for her.



She furthermore suggests that if her 'Jugendüberschwang' nonetheless gets to be too much, he ought to sedate her with drugs (p. 118).

The story is certainly one of Marie Madeleine's more daring. The idea, still unutterable at the time, that women – at least of foreign blood – are by nature just as sexually inclined as men, is proclaimed loudly, as is the idea of the relative nature of morality. As Olga tells her husband towards the end:

Warum soll ich denn leugnen, daß ich als Frau gerade so heiße, sinnliche Regungen haben kann wie jeder Mann?!

Da es nun aber mal die Moralforderungen der Jetztzeit den Frauen verwehren, einfache Regungen einfach zu befriedigen, so müssen diese Instinkte eben unterdrückt werden! (pp. 118-119)

Meanwhile, Olga's suggestion that only drugs can work against woman's 'wildem Blut' (p. 119) – indeed, her offer to let her husband drug her if he wishes – can best be interpreted as an ironic commentary on a practice that was actually commonplace at the turn of the century: the sedating of healthy, aristocratic women for vague 'nervous' disorders, usually with morphine. It seems that Madeleine is offering a subtle challenge to her society to continue repressing female sexuality in face of the increasingly naturalistic and scientific path of human progress, which will ultimately prove the futility of doing so. Indeed, regarding her blunt suggestion, Olga asks her husband, 'Du findest das wohl zu naturalistisch? Nun, – das Leben ist aber doch sehr naturalistisch!' (ibid.).

The title of the story, 'Die indische Felsentaube', stems from Olga's preoccupation with race. At one point, while reading Darwin in the presence of her husband, her mind full of her affair with Ellernhorst, she feels that a certain passage pertains to her. The passage deals with atavism, in which signs of a long-dead species suddenly appear in a modern species. As she tells her husband: 'Es ist hier die Rede davon, daß bei den meisten Tiergattungen einzelne Exemplare plötzlich, ohne jede erkennbare Veranlassung, alle Merkmale des Ur-Stammes zeigen, der längst von der Erde verschwunden ist' (p. 78). As examples of such a phenomenon, Olga cites zebra-like patterns that appear at times on common horses' legs and the features of the long extinct Indian rock dove, which appear once and awhile amongst normal, European city pigeons. With an interesting twist on Nietzschean philosophy, Olga believes that she herself may be a sort of Indian rock dove, since she has all the features of a race of woman that may have existed long ago, in 'einer Zeit, in der man ganz einfach nur Instinkte hatte und die befriedigte, ohne die Begriffe von 'Böse' und 'Gut', welche die soziale Entwicklung uns aufgezwungen hat!' (pp.74-5). The



correspondence of this idea with Olga's earlier remark that her persona results from her 'Racenmischung' is unmistakable. It seems that the atavism of the amoral, antediluvian 'Weibchentypus' (p. 74) has been released in Olga through the intermixing of two non-Teutonic races, both of which have an inclination towards excessive sensuality.

Even at the close of the novella, Olga continues to evaluate her animal nature as something essentially positive. Rather than referring to herself as abnormal, she designates her surroundings as foreign and ultimately unnatural. She herself is merely far away from her tropical homeland, where human, sexual nature takes its course without a second thought for morality: 'Das bin ich: – Die indische Felsentaube, verirrt in eine fremde Zeit, – in ein fremdes Land, – weit, unendlich weit von ihrer sonnigen Heimat, wo die Menschen entstehen und lieben und sterben wie Blumen oder wie Tiere' (p. 114). In such passages, *Die indische Felsentaube* becomes an engaging, if flawed representation of the preoccupation, even hysteria, regarding race in turn-of-the-century Germany, which was intertwined with the preoccupation with gender and sexuality, the question of women's rights and the question as to what was natural for the human being.

### **Hidden Sensuality: The Anglo-Indian Maud of *Die Wegweiserin* (1908)**

Madeleine's second story featuring a mixed-race erotic female transfers us to one of her favourite destinations, the French Riviera, which, as an erotic playground for countless nationalities, is particularly suited to such topics. In the village of Eze, the German Karl Frey, cited earlier as a classic example of male, Teutonic *Rassenschönheit*, has been visiting his artist-friend Felix von Garten, who has rented a cottage on the estate of Colonel Glottburne, an English lord. Sojourning with the lord is his niece, a dazzling young woman of English and Indian parentage, whom Garten has been painting in a bayadere costume. Karl looks upon the portrait in amazement: 'Die großen umschatteten Augen dieses Weibes in dem schleierdünnen Tänzerinnenkostüm blickten so seltsam zärtlich, so geheimnisvoll lüstern auf ihn herab. Und die Haut ihrer entblößten Schultern war weiß wie die Tuberosen es sind oder der Jasmin. – –'.<sup>65</sup> At this point, there is still no mention of Maud's Indian blood, but there is every hint. Colonel Glottburne himself spent many years in India

and the comparison of Maud's skin to jasmine, a traditionally Indian flower, seems implicating.

The real Maud, however, would appear to have little in common with her portrait. As Garten remarks at the beginning of the story, 'Miß Maud ist zwar eine Schönheit, aber sie läßt mich kalt' (p. 159), and when Frey first encounters Maud in person, she is indeed cold and gawky rather than sensual and soft. In fact, Frey is just in time to lend her support as she almost trips over, yet she has no word of thanks for him. Her demeanour seems almost stereotypically English, despite her Indian eyes: 'Mit verdrossener und gelangweilter Miene schritt sie vorwärts, die breiten Augenlider mit den langen, dunklen Wimpern über die Augen gesenkt' (p. 169). Meanwhile, the grotesquely gaunt figure of her English uncle walking next to her hardly complements her small and feminine body:

Die riesenhaft große und grotesk hagere Gestalt des Engländers, daneben die unförmlichen Konturen der Frauengestalt, welche neben diesem Riesen winzig klein aussah, – das Bild war wohl geeignet, die Gedanken zu zerstören, die Frey sich in bezug [sic] auf Miß Maud gemacht. (ibid.)

Having awaited a Salome or Salammbo, Frey is noticeably disappointed: 'Lauter Enttäuschungen! [...] Und heute diese Miß Maud, die sich als berauschende Schlange malen läßt und in Wirklichkeit ein sauertöpfisches Gesicht macht, einen Großmuttermantel trägt und über ihre eigenen Füße stolpert' (ibid.).

Frey is in for a pleasant surprise, however. Maud will soon enough open up her sensual, Indian side to him, exposing herself as exactly the 'berauschende Schlange' he was hoping for. One evening, she waits under Frey's window and when he happens to open it, she jumps into the nearby bushes where she hides, luring Frey in with a mysterious, mocking and enticing sort of laughter. When Frey finally finds Maud, they make love in the moonlit bushes, where Maud seems to be in her element. Here, her real-life body finally displays the *Rassenschönheit* of her portrait:

In diesem geisterhaftem Mondlicht war ihr Gesicht von durchsichtiger Blässe und ihre Augen dunkel und rätselhaft.

Der Überwurf aus dünner Seide, den sie trug, verriet das vollendete Ebenmaß ihrer Formen, das Karl schon auf dem Bilde bewundert' (p. 173).

The next day however, when Frey encounters Maud by chance, she is once again cold and stereotypically English: 'kühl bis zur Unhöflichkeit' (ibid.). This is not to say that she has had her fill of Frey; a few nights later, she is under his window again.

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<sup>65</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die Wegweiserin* in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 1, p. 164.

It is only after Frey's first sexual encounter with Maud that Garten happens to mention her mixed racial heritage to Frey. Garten explains that he can only paint Maud on sunny days, since, on rainy and overcast days, Maud spends her time, like Baron Herlitz's Creole mother in *Pygmalion*, next to the fireplace:

Da sitzt sie im Arbeitszimmer ihres Onkels am Kamin, so dicht am Feuer, als ob sie sich rösten wolle und weint und miaut, wie eine kleine Katze [...] Sie friert immer so. Ihre Mutter war Indierin und sie selbst ist in Indien geboren und hat ihre Kindheit dort verbracht. (p. 182)

Thus, it seems that Indian blood, transplanted to a more northerly climate, provides a good basis not only for a sort of benign *femme fatale*, but also for the tendencies of other decadent, female personages: the delicate, idle *femme fragile* and the childish *femme enfant*.

As it turns out, Maud is also something of a female dandy when it comes to her attraction to Frey. In the course of their second erotic encounter, when the baffled Frey asks Maud what she wants from him, Maud opens her 'feuchtschimmernden dunklen, indischen Augen' and says, 'Oh, du bist so schön [...] und so hell, Haar wie Gold'" (p. 190). As the narrator luxuriates in the picturesque racial contrast between the German and the Indian, Maud herself luxuriates in Frey's blondness, as if he were an *objet d'art*. She joins the ranks of other female, non-Teutonic characters in Marie Madeleine's work, who often want nothing other than an exotic, blond male as a sort of sexual pet. Indeed, Maud is so intoxicated with Frey's looks that she later pursues him to Paris to declare, 'Ich habe immer an Dich gedacht [...] Oh, du bist so schön, – – so blond' (p. 213). Frey, however, as an impeccable German, will ultimately resist Maud's 'märchenhafte, dunkle Augen' (ibid.). His true love, as it turns out, is a blue-eyed girl of good German stock.

The idea of the softly seductive Indian, an element of Gustav Moreau's aforementioned painting 'Les Rois Mages', surfaces in Marie Madeleine's work on other occasions, notably in *Die drei Nächte* (1901), and seems to have been a minor topos in turn-of-the-century consciousness. The idea owes much to the legendary bayaderes, or female Indian dancers, who enjoyed a dubious reputation as demi-courtesans. A lascivious, bronze-skinned bayadere is pictured in the German Symbolist painter Leo Putz's 'Bajadere' of 1903; here the Indian dancer is seen lying naked and caressing a pet bear who is trying to lick her (fig. 58). The author Maria Janitschek, a contemporary of Marie Madeleine who was moderately influenced by the decadent movement, also includes a sensual Indian in her novel *Aus Aphroditens*

*Garten* (1902). She becomes the lover of a German man who is unable to face up to the mature and virtuous, blond German woman he ought to love.<sup>66</sup> The radical twist to Madeleine's *Die Wegweiserin*, however, is once again the idea that women – at least of non-Teutonic blood – can harbour just as much of a body-centred, objectifying sexuality as men.

### **The Legacy of the 'belle boulangère': Mieke of *Ehre* (1911)**

Sensual blood transmitted from a non-Teutonic race also provides the ironic catch to Madeleine's short story *Ehre* (1911). The protagonist Erich von Hartungen is the descendant of a certain legendary 'belle boulangère', the lover of one of the former kings of France, a baker-woman whom the king made into a countess, 'die Gräfin von Conin'. Apparently, Hartungen's mother descends directly from the 'belle boulangère' and is herself a born Countess of Conin from the Huguenot side of the family, which took refuge in Germany. Hartungen's appearance is nothing special, but he has a certain foreign appeal. As one woman of the nobility explains: 'Er hat sowas... ich weiß nicht so recht, wie ich es ausdrücken soll..... so.... so eine Art Charme'.<sup>67</sup> Hartungen's sister Mieke is also no beauty, yet she shares the same ineffable charm of her brother: 'sie ist nicht gerade schön, aber dieses undefinierbare Etwas hat sie auch' (ibid.). Her body is in fact deceptively Teutonic. She is 'ein großes, kräftiges Mädchen, dessen starke Knochen und aschblonde Haare nichts von dem romanischen Blute verrieten, das in ihren Adern war' (p. 79).

Erich von Hartungen uses the story of his legendary ancestor as a topic for harmless flirtation. Indeed, the local aristocracy paradoxically regards the Hartungen's French baker-woman's blood as something ennobling. An aunt on his father's side, who is infatuated with Hartungen, contemplates fancifully: 'Ja, ja, dies leichte französische Blut!' (p. 81). A young girl of the nobility, after having danced with charming Hartungen at a ball, reads all that she can find about the 'belle boulangère' and ponders to herself: 'O Gott, welche Ehre, wenn man solch eine Urahne hat – – –!' (ibid.).

A scandal, however, is about to shake Hartungen's province of 'Hachingen-Büttendorf'. The newly deceased minister-president left behind a diary, recently published, which reveals that he had an affair with an aunt on Hartungen's mother's

<sup>66</sup> See Maria Janitschek, *Aus Aphroditens Garten*, vol. 1: *Maiblumen*. Leipzig: Hermann Seemann, 1902.

<sup>67</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Ehre* in *Die heiligsten Güter*, vol. 1. Leipzig: Elischer, 1911, p. 78.

side, the 'belle boulangère' line, who is now deceased herself. Unfortunately, while the blood of the historical 'belle boulangère' may be ennobling, there is nothing ennobling about having such sexual intrigue in the immediate family. As one of Hartungen's friends pityingly tells him: 'ich kann es dir ja nachfühlen, mein lieber, guter Junge: peinlich ist es natürlich sehr, wenn man solch eine Tante hat! — — — —' (p. 89).

Nonetheless, time heals the wounded pride of Hartungen's family and as the narrator ironically states: 'endlich begannen sie sich wieder als Nachkommen der belle boulangère zu fühlen' (p. 90). But the worst is yet to come. One of the officers in Hartungen's regiment is having an affair with an unknown lady and Hartungen and his fellow officers are determined to find out who she is. Through intrigues and spying, they discover that it is Mieze, Hartungen's sister. In the ensuing duel between Hartungen and his sister's seducer, the latter remains unscathed while Hartungen is injured. Bedridden and contemplative, Hartungen begins to grasp the irony of being descended from the 'belle boulangère': 'Bei meiner Urahne ist's eine Ehre, — — — bei meiner Tante ist es peinlich, — — — bei meiner Schwester ist es eine Schande. — — — und nun zu denken, da sie alle drei ganz dasselbe getan haben — — —!' (p. 97) Thus, the 'belle boulangère' is a new version of the 'indische Felsentaube' — a distant, non-Teutonic forebear whose erotic inclinations resurface in her progeny, causing sensuality and scandal. In both cases, atavistic, foreign blood becomes a symbol for woman's true, sensual nature, confined within moralistic, German culture.

To provide a further sense of the cultural context in which Madeleine wrote *Die Ehre*, it is worth pointing out that the motif of a French relative, bequeathing his or her problematic blood to future generations, appears elsewhere in the popular fiction of the day. For instance, the premise of August Trinius' short story *Die Ahne* (1903) is the seduction of the young Thuringian girl Kathrine by a soldier from Napoleon's occupation army. As the narrator remarks, the French were the conquerors not only in 'Gesetz und Verwaltung' but also 'über die Herzen': 'Dunkle Augen und bestrickendes Wesen machen bald den Feind des Vaterlandes vergessen'.<sup>68</sup> The French soldiers leave town after half a year, but Kathrine is left with an infant girl 'dessen dunkles Haar von ihm erzählte, aus dessen dunklen Augen der zu ihr sprach, dem sie den Frühling ihres Lebens freiwillig hingeben hatte [...]' (ibid.). When her daughter reaches womanhood, her Latin *Rassenschönheit* — her

‘blauschwarzes Haar’ and ‘leis gebräunte Haut’ (ibid.) – wins her much male attention. She marries and gives birth to a son, Bruno, but passes away, along with her husband, early on, leaving young Bruno alone with his grandmother. Bruno grows up to be quite a brutal and sensual character: ‘fahrig und wild [...] von nicht zu bändiger Trotz, rauher Willkür und einem bösen Zug von Grausamkeit’ (ibid.). He ends up wasting money and dancing and drinking excessively. Women, however, chase after him, since he is handsome and cavalier. Indeed, Kathrine anxiously recognises the French lover of her youth: ‘Das war ganz seine Gestalt, die eigene Kopfhaltung, das Auge dessen, dem sie einst ihre ganze Seligkeit hingegen hatte!’ (p. 1170). Only Bruno has a wild look about him that the French soldier never had. Considering the consciousness of the day, the implication is almost certainly that it is the warring blood mixture in Bruno that gives him this look. Bruno too marries and fathers a child but is bored in marriage, stops working regularly and turns into a violent alcoholic. His child, meanwhile, is sickly and soon dies. His poor Thuringian grandmother, ‘die Ahne’, must observe in torment the long-term costs of having mixed her blood with that of a Latin man.

### **A Sensual Rhinelander: Frau von Landen of *Entsühnt* (1915)**

In the years that followed, Marie Madeleine continued to present characters, overwhelmingly of the female gender, who have non-Teutonic admixture and a correspondingly sensual nature. In her collection of war stories of 1915, written in the patriotic spirit following the outbreak of World War I, Latin or Slavic descent become synonymous with an erotic sensuality that is particularly unacceptable, even unpatriotic, during wartime. At this point, as Germany was threatened from all sides, all the longing for Dionysian landscapes and exotic sexual encounters that so characterised German culture of the turn of the century had to be expurgated. The pages of *Der Welt Spiegel*, once full of articles on foreign lands and peoples and adorned with the bodies of exotic races, now have little room for anything other than patriotic war reports. The image is suddenly of a very sober, matter-of-fact journal. Only one collage perversely hints at the exoticism of old: ‘Exotische Hilfstruppen unserer Feinde’.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> August Trinius, *Die Ahne*, pp. 1169-70 in *Die Woche*, 27 June 1903, p. 1169.

<sup>69</sup> See *Der Welt Spiegel*, 26 November 1914.



Marie Madeleine for her part integrated images of racial beauty and racial sensuality into her wartime stories, now written from a patriotic, pro-war standpoint. In *Entsühnt*, for instance, a good-natured officer, Hans-Joachim von Kerkow, seeks to redeem himself for the affair he had with an older woman, Frau von Landen, the wife of a Prussian major. Both the officer and his illicit lover become further examples of *Rassenschönheit*. Kerkow is the picture of North German nobility: ‘Seine hochgewachsene Gestalt von edlem Gliederbau, sein schmaler, blondhaariger Kopf mit den scharfgeschnittenen Zügen, sein ganzes Äußere trug deutlich den Stempel des norddeutschen Edelmannes, des Sohnes aus einem Kriegergeschlecht’.<sup>70</sup> Frau von Landen, meanwhile, hails from the Rhein region and has Latin blood: ‘Sie war eine hohe, üppige Erscheinung mit schwarzem Haar und dunklen Augen. Unstreitig hatte sie, wie so mancher am Rhein, romanisches Blut in den Adern’ (p. 161).

It is Frau von Landen, in her Latin sensuality, who seduces Kerkow. The latter never imagined that he would end up having an affair with her, since he prefers blondes: ‘Übrigens war sie durchaus nicht Kerkows Geschmack. Er hatte immer das Blonde, Rosige, Junge gemocht, – auch Fräulein von Weghusen, die er sich zur Lebensgefährtin zu wählen gedachte, hatte ganz diesen Typ’ (ibid.). But this is a typical scenario in the dark-haired Madeleine’s work; men who believe they like only innocent and ethereal blondes, that is, ‘blonde Tugendhaftigkeit’, to use a term from Maria Janitschek’s *Aus Aphrodites Garten*,<sup>71</sup> are often in for a surprise.

Kerkow and Frau von Landen meet at a reception and, since she is a cosmopolitan woman, a *Weltdame*, she ends up inviting Kerkow regularly to her place for friendly conversation. However, one afternoon, she bends towards him and gives him a kiss, initiating their affair, which comes to light and concludes in a duel between Kerkow and her husband, in which Kerkow does not aim, but ends up injuring the major all the same. Kerkow is then tried before a war tribunal and sentenced to two years imprisonment, not to mention dismissal from service. He then suffers the humiliation of having to earn his living as a paid dancer in a casino and then as a salesman.

All the while, Kerkow is tormented by the instincts of his ‘Kriegergeschlecht’ and yearns to participate in the developing war. He is soon redeemed by an older

<sup>70</sup> *Entsühnt* in ...und muß Abschied nehmen in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 2, p. 159.

<sup>71</sup> Maria Janitschek, *Aus Aphrodites Garten*, vol. 1: *Maiblumen*, p. 127.

German officer, who lets him know that he can volunteer for service as a simple soldier. The older officer has a noble, German physiognomy, heralding Kerkow's immanent redemption and 'repatriation' to the German race after his act of treachery with the Latin-blooded wife of a superior:

Da schlug Hans-Joachim die Augen auf, sah voll in das klare  
Edelmannsgesicht da vor ihm, in dem Pflichtgetreue geschrieben stand und  
Selbstzucht, Überlegenheit und Mitgefühl.  
Ein paar Augenblicke sah er hinein in dieses deutsche Gesicht, das den Stempel  
der inneren Vollendung trug. (p.165)

Like a Teutonic Knight of old Prussia, Kerkow is accepted into the ranks of the military despite his sinful past and is given the chance to redeem himself through fighting. Ultimately, Kerkow performs a courageous deed on the eastern front and is consequently promoted to officer, the position he lost on account of his liaison.

As indicated from the outset, in the six Marie Madeleine stories we have now examined in the context of racial psychology, the specifics of foreign blood, though often of significance, are not as important as the mere fact of non-Teutonic racial admixture itself. Mieke von Hartungen and Frau von Landen, for instance, are not developed enough to truly qualify as typologically Latin figures. As to the Franco-Russian Olga, it may be possible to extract both a Latin and Slavic strain in her personality, as indicated above with the help of Driesmans, but she is more importantly a broader emblem of non-Teutonic sensuality, as is the half-Creole Baron Herrlitz and the Anglo-Indian Maud. However, in the following chapters, we will discover the extent to which specific racial categories, namely Teutonic, Slavic and Latin, also play a decorative and symbolic role in the work of Marie Madeleine and her contemporaries.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE AESTHETICS OF THE TEUTONIC RACE**

For those unfamiliar with turn-of-the-century culture, it might seem reasonable to suppose that Germans of the day already had a belligerent vision of themselves as blond, superior Aryans, which only required the likes of Hitler to channel it into a genocidal direction. No supposition, however, could be more problematic, particularly since it is not wholly erroneous but rather, contains a misleading portion of truth.

As we have demonstrated in the last chapter, the idea of the blond Aryan had certainly taken root well before the turn of the century. Yet, like so many ideas during this time period, it was characterised by a considerable degree of vagueness, paradox and whimsicality. Only with the publication of Chamberlain's *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (1899), the first work of racial theory to correspond closely to later Nazi conceptions of race, did the romanticisation of the blond Aryan start to go hand in hand with militancy and virulent anti-Semitism in some circles.

In a break with the pessimist Gobineau, Chamberlain argued that the Aryan race was alive and well in Northern Europe. This was already typical of German anthropology of the day. But Chamberlain also demonised the Jews as the great adversaries of the Aryans. Though anti-Semitism had been a feature of German and European culture since time immemorial – and late nineteenth-century Germany was certainly rife with anti-Semitic dogmatists – racial theory, even at its most Aryan-romantic, had remained curiously immune to anti-Semitism. Gobineau, Nietzsche, Poesche, Langbehn and Stratz all romanticise Aryans – either systematically or at one point or another – yet they are startlingly well disposed towards the Jews. Indeed, until Chamberlain, racial theorists tended to regard Jews as a Mediterranean or Middle Eastern people just like any other. Even if their particular role in Western Culture was regarded as problematic – even if the likes of Wagner or Paul de Lagarde felt that Europe would be better without them – they were not yet considered to be a degenerate and parasitic race worthy of extermination. For most gentile Germans of the day, the problem of Jewishness, if a problem at all, was still of a primarily cultural-historical nature and could be solved through conversion and assimilation.

Chamberlain was also one of the first theorists to espouse the idea that Aryans ought to be bred like dogs or horses. This would become an increasingly interesting concept for many chauvinist romantics, such as Willibald Hentschel, who would temporarily put it into effect at 'Mitgard', his Aryan breeding colony. However, it was not an idea that the majority of turn-of-the-century Germans took particularly

seriously – though, as we will see, it is mirrored somewhat ironically in the literature of the day. In the end, we must be careful not to overestimate the immediate influence of Chamberlain's huge and impenetrable magnum opus. The majority of German writers and artists are unlikely to have read it. Though Kaiser Wilhelm II spoke fondly of Chamberlain and his ideas, the true reception of *Die Grundlagen* would not occur until after World War I, when it became popular reading for Hitler and his Nazi party. Around 1900, Chamberlain's theories still represented only one particular strain of racial thought.

On the other hand, the more whimsical racial conceptions of Nietzsche, Langbehn and their heirs seem to have held considerable sway over the German artistic world. As Klaus von See points out, racial theory in turn-of-the-century Germany, even that which romanticised the Teuton as a blond Aryan, was 'in der Mehrzahl ihrer Anhänger keineswegs so militant, wie man vielleicht vermuten möchte'.<sup>1</sup> See refers to the resonance of racial theory in the *Lebensreform* movement – a resonance that was based not on feelings of aggression but rather 'auf dem rassenhygienischen Veredelungsgedanken, der kritisch-pessimistischen Einstellung zur modernen Zivilisation [...] und damit auf einer sektiererisch anmutenden Politik- und Staatsferne' (p. 214). In this context, See mentions the artist Fidus, 'der Zeichner nordischer Lichtmenschen' (ibid.), a vegetarian and champion of animal rights, whose teacher, Karl Wilhelm Diefenbach, considered man to be a fruit-gatherer by nature. The latter blamed the consumption of meat for man's aggression. As See notes: 'Man strebt in diesen Kreisen nach einem Leben von naturhaft-paradiesischer Friedfertigkeit' (p. 214).

Fidus portrayed the blond, blue-eyed Teutonic race, particularly its male manifestations, as something endlessly aesthetic and yet curiously passive, peaceful and harmonious. It is the Baldur archetype of the Teutonic man – the beautiful, blond Christ-like god of Norse mythology – as opposed to the warlike 'Thor' or 'Siegfried' archetype. In Madeleine's work we often find the literary portrayal of this decorative, Baldur-like German male.

Equally characteristic of this more innocent phase of Aryan enthusiasm was Julius Langbehn, author of *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (1890), which was widely read and remained in print up until the end of World War II. Langbehn romanticised the 'Niederdeutsche', the Teutonic peasant, who supposedly blended inner depth with a healthy, child-like innocence and simplicity. Langbehn was convinced that the Teuton, who he felt was exemplified by the Dutch painter Rembrandt, was a born

artist and that Germany's future would be primarily in art and trade. As he states in his introduction:

Individualismus ist die Wurzel aller Kunst; und da die Deutschen unzweifelhaft das eigenartigste und eigenwilligste aller Völker sind: so sind sie auch [...] das künstlerisch bedeutendste aller Völker.[...] Die große Zukunft der Deutschen beruht auf ihrem ekzentrischen Charakter. Aus dem gleichen Grunde kann ihre höchste Bildungsstufe nur eine kunsterfüllte sein [...]<sup>2</sup>  
More specifically, Langbehn conceived of the ideal German as a proudly naïve, hard-working and non-intellectual country artist, a painting 'Michel', who draws his inspiration from his native landscape rather than from foreign aesthetics. Hardly militant, Langbehn merely hoped for the cultural and eventual political unity of all 'Nether Germans', from the Germans and the Dutch to the Danes and even the English. Indeed, in a typically whimsical turn, Burns, Shelly, Shakespeare and Bacon all become archetypal 'Niederdeutsche' in Langbehn's conception, as do Early Renaissance Venetians, with their supposedly Aryan-Lombard blood and their penchant for art and commerce.

Langbehn's ideas resounded in the spirit of *Lebensreform* and in the burgeoning *Heimatkunst* and *Heimatliteratur* that followed the publication of his book. Of course, like other philosophers, he had merely consolidated ideas already latent in his culture, whether the conception of the German as industrious and virtuous – a central aspect of Richard Wagner's and Gustav Freytag's philosophy – or the idea of the German as a born artist and merchant, which particularly resounds in Freytag's *Soll und Haben*.

### **The German as Racial Mixture**

Aggressive and passive renditions of *Germanenschwärmerei* aside, the turn-of-the-century German-speaking world also harboured a surprising tendency towards the romanticisation of mixed race. Scholars such as Friedrich Müller, Heinrich von Treitschke or Heinrich Driesmans built on this aspect of Gobineau's philosophy, rendering it more important than the latter would have liked. Indeed, while Gobineau and Chamberlain both praise the English as the purest of Teutonic races, Müller praises them as the most mixed: 'Der am meisten unter allen germanischen Stämmen mit fremdem Blute versetzte, nämlich der englische, zeigt im Ganzen das grösste Acclimatisationsvermögen und die zähste Widerstandskraft im Kampfe ums Dasein'.<sup>3</sup> This opinion of the English was later shared by Heinrich Driesmans,<sup>4</sup> who

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<sup>1</sup> Klaus von See, *Barbar, Germane, Arier. Die Suche nach der Identität der Deutschen*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1994, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> Julius Langbehn, *Rembrandt als Erzieher*. Leipzig: C.L. Hirschfeld, 1922, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Müller, *Allgemeine Ethnologie*. Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1879, p. 62.



furthermore regarded racial mixture as central to Teutonic culture as a whole. He attributes, for instance, the 'reges Kulturleben' in Holland to the intermixing of West Frisians and Batavians, while the German East Frisians, still the objects of many a German quip, 'nie den Drang zu einem solchen verspürt [haben], weil der Reiz dazu in dem erforderlichen Zusatz fremden Blutes fehlte' (pp. 95-96). In Driesmans' conception, the East Frisians are 'zu reinrassig, zu reingermanisch,' (p. 95) as are the Danes (pp. 99-100). The Thuringians, however, are 'eine merkwürdig bewegliche und geistig regsame Bevölkerung' on account of their mixed Teutonic, Celtic and Slavic blood (p. 96).

Similarly, the historian Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896), himself of Czech background, flirted with the idea of his Slavic heritage and considered great Germans such as Luther and Bismarck to be half-Slavs themselves.<sup>5</sup> Like Müller and Driesmans, Treitschke argued that all great civilisations result from racial mixture and that, as far as Germany is concerned, this is evident in the part-Celtic Southern Germans and the part-Slavic Prussians (ibid.).

Taking such ideas a step further was the lesser known Austrian theorist Joseph Ritter von Neupauer, who similarly argued that the greatness of modern Germany had more to do with racial mixture than Teutonic purity. In 'Der Kulturwert der Mischrassen und reinen Rassen', Neupauer claims that 'Mischlinge' are better equipped for culture than 'einheitliche' and 'unvermischte Rassen'<sup>6</sup> since the diversity of blood provides for the diversity of talents needed in an advanced society. Neupauer, however, went so far as to claim that while the pure Teuton may have the 'Energie des Kriegers', he lacks the 'Energie des Denkers und Forschers' (p. 374). As evidence, he cites the half- millennium of cultural darkness after Teutonic tribes took control of Europe during late antiquity. Neupauer readily pays tribute to Teutonic 'Kraft' and 'Schönheit' but states that the 'germanische Element', with its 'Geist der Zerfahrenheit' should not be allowed to rule – and that it is to Bismarck's credit that this element has been repressed in Germany (p. 386). Thus, in stark contrast to Gobineau, Neupauer requires 'mehr Blut der dunkelfarbigen Urbevölkerung als der nordeuropäischen Rasse' for 'eine stürmische Kulturbewegung' (p. 386). The future, according to Neupauer, will put Teutonic racial elements in a secondary, decorative role, where they belong (p. 386). As we will soon discover, this idea of the Teuton as primarily decorative resounds in the work of Marie Madeleine and Thomas Mann.

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<sup>4</sup> See Heinrich Driesmans, *Rasse und Milieu*. Berlin: Johannes Rade, 1902, pp. 101-2.

<sup>5</sup> See Klaus von See, p. 302.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Ritter von Neupauer, 'Der Kulturwert der Mischrassen und reinen Rassen', pp. 370-89 in



Another forebear of mixed-race enthusiasm was Nietzsche, who, despite his ambivalence towards the 'Mischling' in some of his writings, boasted of his alleged Slavic blood and often sang the praises of both the Jews and the Slavs. It is true that Nietzsche, in his love of paradox, left behind a legacy of ideas that were promptly interpreted as vehemently pro-German, not least of which was his vague and ambivalent concept of the Aryan conquerors of prehistoric and Classical Europe as noble, 'blond beasts'. In his own day however, chauvinist Germans cursed Nietzsche as a 'schamlosen Polen' or even as a Jew.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, according to Nietzsche, the Germans, far from being pure Aryans, were the most mixed of races: 'ein Volk der ungeheuerlichsten Mischung und Zusammenrührung von Rassen, vielleicht sogar mit einem Übergewicht des vor-arischen Elementes'.<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche perceived 'kaum eine Begriffs-, geschweige eine Blutsverwandtschaft' between the Teutons of old and the modern Germans (ibid.).

This sense of Germany as a land of many races is apparent in some of the best-known writing of the day – that of the young Thomas Mann. In the last chapter, we observed how Madeleine's character Frau von Landen, as a Rhinelander, has Latin blood. Similar dynamics form the basis of Mann's celebrated portrayal of the inhabitants of Munich, where Mann spent most of his young life. As Ilse B. Jonas writes of Mann's short story *Gladius Dei* (1902): 'Selbst die süddeutschen Menschen [...] erinnern an Italiener einer lebensfrohen Epoche'.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Mann goes to the point of fashioning a sensual, brunette female type, a *Rassenschönheit*, to populate the Munich of *Gladius Dei*. Three times, the narrator gives ironic mention to 'diesem hübschen, unternetzten Typus mit den brünetten Haarbandeaux, den etwas zu großen Füßen und den unbedenklichen Sitten'.<sup>10</sup> The concept of the Bavarians as a race unto themselves is also a feature of Mann's *Buddenbrooks*. Here, the North German divorcée Antonia 'Tony' Buddenbrook decides, unluckily, to marry the *Münchmer* Alois Permaneder, whom she follows to his home city. As it turns out, the Bavarians, including her husband, are far too relaxed, lazy and sensual for her tastes. To Tony's horror, her husband even ends up making a pass at their beautiful cook Babette, who conforms to a seductive, southern racial type common in Munich: 'Babette [...] hat übrigens ein recht angenehmes Exterieur und schon etwas ganz

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*Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 3, no. 6, 1904, p. 377.

<sup>7</sup> See Gerd Schank, 'Rasse' und 'Züchtung' bei Nietzsche. Berlin / NY: Walter de Gruyter, 2000, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* in *Werke in drei Bänden*, vol. 2, p. 786.

<sup>9</sup> Ilse B. Jonas, *Thomas Mann und Italien*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1969, p. 47.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Mann, *Gladius Dei* in *Sämtliche Erzählungen*, p. 155.

südliches, wie es hier manche gibt, mit schwarzem Haar und schwarzen Augen und Zähnen, um die man sie beneiden könnte'.<sup>11</sup>

Mann's portrayal of the Munich natives corresponds closely to the conception of 'alpine' racial type, a designation employed at the turn of the century for the curiously dark inhabitants of the southern germanophone world. In a short article on the alpine type, the anthropologist Gustav Kraitschek writes: 'Bei demselben sind die Haare braun, die Augenfarbe hat die Tendenz zum Grauen. Der Kopf ist rund, Gesicht breit, Gestalt mittelgroß'.<sup>12</sup> The type is supposed to be at home in 'Altbayern, Tirol und den übrigen deutschen Alpenländern', where a 'Kreuzung' between Teutons and 'einem kurzköpfigen breitgesichtigen Volke von dunkler Haarfarbe' took place (p. 220). Friedenthal, meanwhile, offers a similar description of the female Munich type, which includes a psychological portrait evoking Mann's sensual brunettes of *Gladius Dei*:

Schwarzes Haar, dunkle Augen und runde Köpfe sind typisch für die Münchnerinnen, und sind es ebenso für die Frauen Oberbayerns und Tirols. [...] An Temperament, Lebenslust und unermüdlicher Vergnügungssucht übertrifft die Äplerin alle deutschen Stämme. [...] Von ihrem Vergnügen an sinnlichen Genüssen macht sie kein Hehl.<sup>13</sup>

The texts by Marie Madeleine we will examine are further evidence that the idea of the German as a blond Aryan was by no means a given in German consciousness at the turn of the century. Regarding the Aryan type, the Jewish anthropologist Maurice Fishberg ironically noted:

Die Deutschen sind auf diesen Menschheitstypus so stolz, daß sie ihn den 'indogermanischen' benamst [sic] haben – der Tatsache ungeachtet, daß weniger als die Hälfte der Bevölkerung ihres Landes hochgewachsen, blond und langköpfig ist, und in einigen der südlichen Provinzen kaum 15% der Bevölkerung von diesem Typus sind.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, in order to understand the dynamics of racial consciousness in turn-of-the-century Germany, it is necessary to rethink traditional ideas of what constituted the self and the other at this time. Can we truly speak of a turn-of-the-century, German identification with the Aryan type, when – despite the considerable romanticism it engendered – so few Germans fit this image or even felt that it was representative of Germany? Perhaps the very reason why the Aryan type was capable of exercising such profound enchantment amongst Germans is that it was exotic. In Scandinavia, where the blond and blue-eyed are more frequent – and where the idea of a racial and cultural continuity with Aryan-Teutonic ancestors is more self-evident – the idea was

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks*, p. 306.

<sup>12</sup> Gustav Kraitschek, 'Der alpine Menschen-Typus' in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1902, p. 219. Originally published in *Centralblatt für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*, vol. 6, no. 6, p. 321.

<sup>13</sup> Albert Friedenthal, *Das Weib im Leben der Völker*, vol. 2, p. 513.

relatively uninteresting. As we will observe, in Madeleine's work, there is indeed a sense of blond Teutons as exotic, decorative figures, not unlike like Gauguin's Tahitians.

### **Teutonic vs. Southern *Rassenschönheit***

On a purely aesthetic level, the Aryan-Teutonic type certainly dazzled many turn-of-the-century Germans. Chauvinistic anthropologists in particular did not shy away from making poetic remarks about the beauty of the Teutons. Ludwig Wilser's *Rassen und Völker* (1912), for instance, begins with the remark that 'die lichthaarigsten und weißhäutigsten Menschen auch geistig am hellsten sind'.<sup>15</sup> A similar statement can be found many years earlier in Theodor Poesche's *Die Arier*, regarding Aryans and their original, pagan religion: 'Es ist eine schöne Übereinstimmung, dass die lichte Race, deren Augen die Bläue des Himmels widerspiegeln, und deren Haare einen Lichtglanz um sie verbreitet, das leuchtende Himmelsgewölbe als oberste Macht verehrten'.<sup>16</sup> But amidst such hymns to the Aryans, we chance upon some German scholars with equally aesthetic visions of other races. Certainly, Stratz's idea of Teutonic superiority faltered at the sight of attractive, dark Mediterranean women, as we have seen in the previous chapter. The aforementioned Joseph Ritter von Neupauer, meanwhile, attempted to rebuff the theories of Ludwig Wilser and company as follows:

Doch hat die blonde Rasse keineswegs das alleinige Privilegium des Adels der menschlichen Gestalt. Wir haben unter den türkischen und italienischen Staatsmännern, Offizieren und Gelehrten schwarzhaarige Typen, die an Männerschönheit den herrlichsten Typen germanischer Abkunft vollkommen ebenbürtig sind und was die untersten Volksschichten anbelangt, so zeugen die bosnischen Regimenter, daß hoher schlanker Wuchs und Schönheit in einer schwarzhaarigen Bevölkerung ebenso vorkommen können, wie in einer blonden.<sup>17</sup>

That the blond Aryan was not in fact the *Schönheitsideal* of every turn-of-the-century German is also confirmed by certain chauvinist racial theorists themselves. There was much discourse at this time about the fatal attraction that not only southern culture but also southern racial beauty held for Teutons – the very reason, it seems, why Germans had become so hopelessly mixed. Julius Langbehn, for instance, bemoaned 'de[n] alte[n] deutsche[n] Fluch des Schweifens in die Fremde' (p. 21) – something which he felt had started with the Teutonic adoption of Roman culture and had not ceased since. Rather than racial consciousness in the history of the Aryans

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<sup>14</sup> Maurice Fishberg, *Die Rassenmerkmale der Juden*. München: Ernst Reinhardt, 1913, p. 49.

<sup>15</sup> Ludwig Wilser, *Rassen und Völker*, Leipzig: Thomas, 1912, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Poesche, *Die Arier*, p. 115.

<sup>17</sup> Neupauer, 'Der Kulturwert der Mischrasen und reinen Rassen', pp. 386-7.

and Teutons, Theodor Poesche found 'im Gegentheil lebhaftes Gefallen an den dunklen Schönen, die, wie man auch bei uns beobachten kann, bessere Chancen bei der Verheirathung haben' (p. 183). A fatalistic Heinrich Driesmans concluded that the Teutons were inherently attracted to the foreign:

Es liegt in der Natur des Germanen, fremdes Wesen zu überschätzen und mit solcher Begierde anzunehmen, daß er darüber sich selbst verliert [...] Die Germanen haben niemals Wert auf Rassenzucht und Rassenreinheit gelegt; sie haben sich allezeit mit jeder anderen Rasse eingelassen. (pp. 20-21)

A more aggressive Ludwig Wilser insisted that Germans must rediscover a Nordic ideal of beauty and become aware, 'daß die in manchen Erzählungen verherrlichten Rabenhaare und schwarzen Glutaugen [...] Merkmale tiefer stehender Rassen sind'.<sup>18</sup>

While Madeleine frequently portrays the mutual erotic attraction between blond northern men and dark southern or Slavic women, Eduard von Keyserling is perhaps the most significant chronicler of the fatal, Teutonic lust for racial and cultural alterity. In *Beate und Mareile*, it is the curse of the diplomat Tarniff clan. In *Bunte Herzen*, it is the disastrous attraction of Count Hamilkar's daughters to Greek and Polish noblemen. In *Nicky*, it is the protagonist's inappropriate escapism with the sickly, exotic Brazilian-German aesthete. In *Fürstinnen*, it is the ageing Count Donalt Streith's descent into oblivion, sickness and death in the arms of an Italian-blooded girl.

### **The Decorative Teuton in Madeleine's Poetry**

Just as the Slavic race is epitomised in Madeleine's work by the Russian *femme fatale*, the Teutonic race is represented by an equally recurrent figure: the happy-go-lucky, beautiful, blond male. He is often the partner of the Russian *femme fatale*, in the form of such characters as Malte von Bärenklau of *Arme Ritter* (1904) or Fredi of *Das Halsband* (1908). While the Russian *femme fatale* is masculinised in her power, the Nordic male is feminised in his role as the object of affection. His appearance and personality often exhibit stereotypically feminine characteristics, such as frivolity or sickness, so that he becomes something of a male equivalent of the *femme fragile* or the *femme enfant*. Thus, one of the last figures we would expect to be associated with alterity in German literature, the Teutonic male, is indeed a manifestation of the exotic 'other'.

We have already observed this vulnerable, blond figure in Madeleine's *Auf Kypros*, in such poems as 'Sumpfhexe', but the motif recurs and is even intensified in her later poetry. Exemplary is the poem 'Im Abendrot' from the collection *Die rote*

<sup>18</sup> Ludwig Wilser, 'Zuchtwahl beim Menschen', pp. 181-190 in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1902, p. 190.

*Rose Leidenschaft* (1912), which presents the image of a blond nobleman, a 'Junker', as he rides off into the sunset at the side of the smitten narrator:

Des Tages flammendes Panier  
Auf Halbmast sank es lange schon.  
Der schönste Junker ritt mit mir  
Durch dieser Abendröte Loh'n.

Wir brauchten Peitsche nicht noch Sporn,  
Wir ritten in verträumter Ruh.  
In goldenen Farben prangt das Korn.  
Das ist so blond... so blond wie du!

Du junges Blut, du edles Blut,  
Ich küß' an dir mich selig satt.  
Der blonde Norden tut so gut,  
Wenn man zu heiße Lippen hat!<sup>19</sup>

In likening the Junker's blond hair to the golden grain of the northern countryside, the narrator conceives of him as part of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of northern race and landscape in harmony – 'der blonde Norden'. Correlations can be found in the German *Lebensreform* movement of the same time period; the *Lebensreformer* Gustav Simons, for instance, considered it possible that the 'haferstrohgelbe' hair colour of Germany's Teutonic ancestors had something to do with their preference for 'Haferspeisen'.<sup>20</sup>

Another interesting example of the blond 'other' can be found in the poetry collection *In Seligkeit und Sünden* (1905), the only Marie Madeleine text containing a reference to male homosexuality. In a series of five short poems under the heading 'Der schwarze Pierrot spricht', Madeleine portrays a black-haired pierrot-figure tormented by desire for a young, blond duke of 'brutaler' and 'tadelloser Rasse' with his 'blonden Pagenhaar' and 'wunderschönen Beinen'.<sup>21</sup> The duke cruelly flirts with the black-haired Pierrot, agitating his 'krankes Blut' (p. 330). Then he departs 'in Süden und Sonne' (p. 331), leaving the pierrot behind in a Nordic climate that obviously does not suit the latter: 'Ich aber friere hier so! / Ich bin ja nur solch ein schwächtiger / solch ein schwächtiger Pierrot!' (p. 331).

The motif continues into Marie Madeleine's last book of poetry *Taumel* in such poems as 'Baldur', the subject of which is described as 'ein blonder Frühlingsgott, der lächelnd segnet' and a 'scheuer, junger Frühlingsgott'.<sup>22</sup> Like the

<sup>19</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die rote Rose Leidenschaft*. Leipzig: Elischer, 1912, pp. 65-6.

<sup>20</sup> see Gustav Simons: 'Rasse und Ernährung' in *Kraft und Schönheit* 4, 1904/05, pp. 156-9. Cited in Uwe Pushner, 'Lebensreform und völkische Weltanschauung', pp. 175-8 in Kai Buchholz, Rita Latocha, Hilke Peckmann, Klaus Wolbert (eds.), *Die Lebensreform. Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900*, vol. 1. Darmstadt: Häusser, 2001, p. 177.

<sup>21</sup> Marie Madeleine, *In Seligkeit und Sünden* in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 2, p. 329.

<sup>22</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Taumel*. Berlin: Borngräber, 1920, p. 53.



Lucifer figure from *Auf Kypros*, he is both Christ-like and pagan-sexual. After he kisses the narrator, the latter says: 'Da starb in meiner Seele Trotz und Spott, / Da hab' ich nicht gezagt und nicht bereut, –' (p. 53). In the poem 'Der Goldhelm', meanwhile, a warrior-figure is rendered a decorative, sex object, with blond hair like 'ein Helm von Gold' and blue eyes like 'gehämmerter Stahl' (p. 37). He is a 'weißestes, blendendes Marmorbild' and his 'Gliederhaus' radiates 'drohende, strotzende Kraft' (p. 38). The excited narrator concludes, harpy-like: 'Sieh, mein Verlangen umstürmt dich wie brausender Adlersflug, – / Goldhelmlträger, komm auf die Lagerstatt! – –' (p. 38).

### Thomas Mann's Decorative Teutons

The decorative quality of the Teutonic race is also an element of Thomas Mann's work, most notably the novella *Tonio Kröger*. Here, as is well known, the eponymous protagonist, a half-Latin writer, longs for the blond and blue-eyed beauty and the spiritual simplicity of his Teutonic, North German countrymen. This theme of 'blond and blue-eyed' normality in *Tonio Kröger* has been taken up by numerous Mann scholars and has even become a general point of reference in literary scholarship, so that Marcel Reich-Ranicki, for instance, writing on the tormented Kafka's relationship with his well-adjusted younger sister Ottla, comments rather unsuitably that the latter 'gehörte – mit Thomas Mann zu sprechen – zu "den anderen, den Blauäugigen,... die den Geist nicht nötig haben"'.<sup>23</sup> Since racial issues in pre-Third Reich Germany, particularly where Jews are not concerned, remain something of a taboo topic, scholars have been reluctant to acknowledge the racial elements in this image and to examine their foundation in Mann's cultural milieu. One would think that Mann engendered the idea of blond and blue-eyed normality independent from his culture and for solely symbolic purposes, completely detached from any racial connotations. Yet the racial overtones could not be more evident when Tonio, believing he has found his two blond childhood loves in Denmark, muses:

Sie waren es nicht so sehr vermöge einzelner Merkmale und der Ähnlichkeit der Kleidung, als kraft der Gleichheit der Rasse und des Typus, dieser lichten, stahlblauäugigen und blondhaarigen Art, die eine Vorstellung von Reinheit, Ungetrübtheit, Heiterkeit und einer zugleich stolzen und schlichten, unberührbaren Sprödigkeit hervorrief...<sup>24</sup>

Mann himself admitted that his early work was haunted by Nietzsche's concept of the 'blonden Bestie' but without its animal character: 'Es ist wahr, die 'blonde

<sup>23</sup> Marcel Reich-Ranicki, 'Kafka, der Liebende' in *Nachprüfung. Aufsätze über deutsche Schriftsteller von gestern*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag: 1990, p. 170.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Mann, *Tonio Kröger* in *Sämtliche Erzählungen*, p. 260.



Bestie' spukt auch in meiner Jugendsichtung, aber sie ist ihres bestialischen Charakters so ziemlich entkleidet, und übriggeblieben ist nichts als die Blondheit zusammen mit der Geistlosigkeit [...]'<sup>25</sup> Thus, in his own words, Mann's image of the Teuton was as a decorative object, as 'blond' and 'geistlos'. It is akin to Neupauer's conception of the Teuton as full of 'Kraft und Schönheit' but not particularly clever. More distantly, it is also related to Moreau's idea of the Caucasian as 'toute de joie, d'ardeur intérieure et de dignité royale'. It has little in common with the more beastly view of the Aryan as 'kühn, gewaltsam, unternehmend und roh', to use Poesche's terminology.<sup>26</sup> Mann's Teuton is a *Jugendstil* Aryan, a 'Lichtmensch' in the tradition of Fidus's pictures or Madeleine's poetry. Indeed, Tonio's journey to Denmark takes on the quality of a wine connoisseur's excursion to Bordeaux. It is a trip to the source, to experience the purest and finest examples of a particular product, in this case, the Teutonic race. Once in Denmark, Tonio luxuriates in the sight of the Aryan Danes just as he eagerly breathes in the sea air: 'Und allerwegen, indes er in verlangsamten, nachdenklichen Zügen die feuchte Seeluft atmete, sah er Augen, die so blau, Haare, die so blond, Gesichter, die von eben der Art und Bildung waren, wie er sie in den seltsam wehen und reuigen Träumen der Nacht geschaut, die er in seiner Vaterstadt verbracht hatte' (p. 253).

Mann's portrayal of Denmark as a bastion of Teutonic purity is equally rooted in the culture of the day and ought to be considered in the context Germany's attempts at Pan-Germanism, which featured much enthusiasm for Scandinavia. This was the age when Kaiser Wilhelm II presented his beloved Norway with the Frithjof-Statue (1913), which he regarded as a monument to the greatness of Aryan culture through the ages. Admiration for the Scandinavians was also a particular feature of German journalism at the time of *Tonio Kröger's* publication. In his article 'Dänische Ausweisungen', for instance, Hans Land is bursting with admiration for the Danes, whom he compares to the ancient Greeks.<sup>27</sup> The image of the Danes here is also of an exceptionally cheerful people, full of chaste *joie de vivre*. Meanwhile, in a 1903 travel article on Scandinavia for *Die Woche*, Victor Ottmann praises the Scandinavian character at the expense of the Latin, encouraging his readers, in a very Mannian twist, to recover in Scandinavia from the unpleasantness of Southern Europe, the portrayal of which evokes Mann's later *Tod in Venedig*:

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Mann, *Lebensabriß* in *Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden*, vol. 11. Frankfurt am Main, 1974, p. 110.

<sup>26</sup> Poesche, *Die Arier*, p. 163.

<sup>27</sup> See Hans Land, 'Dänische Ausweisungen' in *Das neue Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, 1898-1899, pp. 289-94.

Ich habe immer beobachtet, daß die Reisenden im Süden allzubald ihre gute Laune verlieren, weil ihnen die tausend Belästigungen und Prellereien, denen sie dort ausgesetzt sind, etwas heftig auf die Nerven fallen. Der Nordlandreisende wird nur höchst selten Gelegenheit zu solchen Beschwerden finden, denn die Skandinavier sind aufrechte, biedere und gastfreundliche Leute, denen devote Liebedienerei ebenso fernliegt wie jene skrupellose Ausbeutung, die sich der Tourist in südlichen Ländern fast überall gefallen lassen muß. So darf man ohne Übertreibung sagen: man erholt sich nach Gefallen im Norden vom Süden.<sup>28</sup>

It goes without saying the chauvinist anthropologist Ludwig Wilser harboured similarly warm feelings for Scandinavia. In a travel article he wrote for *Die politische-anthropologische Revue*, Wilser even suggests that his fellow Germans give up Danish North Schleswig as an act of good will towards their racial brothers and with the purpose attaining a 'Schutz- und Trutzbündnis'.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, in the age of *Tonio Kröger*, there seems to have been a broad attempt on the part of Germans to quell German-Danish antagonism through references to a common racial heritage. A speech given by the president of Schleswig-Holstein to his German countrymen in 1907 is particularly enlightening in this regard:

Wir weilen hier in einer ganz besonderen Gegend, unter einer Bevölkerung, die uns noch fremd gegenübersteht, weil sie eine andere Sprache spricht. Dennoch dürfen wir nie vergessen, daß es unsere Landsleute sind. Dürfen wir sie nun verständnislos behandeln, bloß weil sie eine andere Sprache reden und noch nach dem nördlichen Nachbarlande hinübersehen? Gemeinsam sind uns ja auch der nordische Himmel, die Lebensbedingungen, der wirtschaftliche Betrieb. Alle sind wir ja auch gleicher Abstammung – ob Cimbern oder Teutonen, ob Süd- oder Nordgermanen, gemeinsam ist uns das gleiche germanische Blut. Flachshaarig sind die Männer, blauäugig die Frauen. Alle sind wir schleswig-holsteinische Landsleute.<sup>30</sup>

Brimming with romance and *Rassenschönheit*, even this politically motivated oration becomes, like so much at the the turn of the century, a primarily decorative undertaking.

### **The Healthy Teuton: *Das Sündenkind* (1908)**

Marie Madeleine's writing includes a few stories which, taken out of the context of the rest of her work, could be regarded as indicators of a profound Teutonic chauvinism. Such texts put the blond Teuton, portrayed as the epitome of health and sanity, in opposition to foreign (Latin and Slavic) degeneracy. The short story *Das Sündenkind*, for instance, seems at first glance like an unadulterated act of *Germanenschwärmerei*. Ominously perhaps, it also happens to be one of Marie

<sup>28</sup> Victor Ottmann, 'Skandinavische Figuren', pp. 1161-6 in *Die Woche*, 27 June 1903, pp. 1162-3.

<sup>29</sup> Ludwig Wilser, 'Nordische Reiseindrücke', pp. 91-100 in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1905, p. 96.

<sup>30</sup> Cited in Anon., 'Dänen und Deutsche' in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 6, no. 6, 1907, p. 399.

Madeleine's better-written prose works, transcending to a certain extent her usual sphere of quickly churned-out popular fiction.

Madeleine initiates this concise story with an interesting atmosphere of ennui, decay and artificiality at a Parisian circus:

Über dem *Cirque Ancien* in Paris lag das Stimmungslose einer Nachmittagsvorstellung.

Das sterbende Licht des Novembertages mischte seine grauen Wellen, die durch die Glaskuppel des Gebäudes drangen, mit dem Lichte der Glühlampen. Diese Glühlampen waren in künstlichen Blumen verborgen, welche sich in großen Bogengirlanden durch den ganzen Zirkus sogen.

Die Blumen waren staubig, – das Zwielflicht häßlich, – die Kostüme der Tänzerinnen wirkten grell in der zweifelhaften Beleuchtung.<sup>31</sup>

The audience consists mostly of Parisian children accompanied by mothers and nannies as well as the odd paramour – this is, after all, Paris. The children in particular are a desperate sight. The little boys have a 'blasse[n] Teint' and an 'alte[n] Gesichtsausdruck' (ibid.) and are awakening prematurely to sexuality: 'mit allzu früh erwachtem Interesse betrachten sie gierig die kurzen Röcke der Tänzerinnen' (ibid.).

The little Parisian girls, meanwhile, seem like perverse dolls:

automatenhaft ruhig saßen sie da, übermäßig geputzt in seidenen, spitzenüberfluteten Kleidchen; sie trugen seidene, mit Pelz verbräunte Glockenhüte, Muffen und Kragen aus Hermelin oder Chinchilla, große Schleifen in den Locken, – die Beine nackt von der halben Wade bis zum halben Oberschenkel.

Und diesen Modedamen *en miniature* entströmte derselbe aufdringliche Parfümgeruch, der ihre Mamas charakterisierte. (ibid.)

These girls are likewise awakening prematurely to sexuality and can already be seen flirting with their mothers' paramours.

Madeleine goes on to portray the circus as blasé and unathletic to a degenerate degree. There is no show of strength, talent or nobility here – only uninspired singing, somersaults and handstands, not to mention overly sarcastic skits that are hardly suitable for children. All the while, the children's laughter is alarmingly unmoved: 'Das Lachen all dieser Kinder klang matt, klang wie Lachen von Automaten' (p. 286).

But there is one childish laugh that sounds different – shockingly and refreshingly different. As it turns out, it is a young boy of such startling beauty, 'daß die Augen die ihn gesucht, lange auf ihm haften blieben' (ibid.). We recognise a spirited young member of the Teutonic race, a beautiful 'blond beast' in the making:

Er stand da, schlank und kräftig, mit einem rosigen Pagengesicht, mit blitzenden, blauen Augen, unter feingeschnittenen Brauen mit langen, aufwärtsgebogenen Wimpern.

<sup>31</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Das Sündenkind* in *Die Stelle, wo sie sterblich sind...* in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 1, p. 285.

Seine üppig quellenden Locken leuchteten wie glitzerndes Gold, und sein hochgeschwungener Mund, der rot wie Feuer war, enthüllte das blitzende Gebiß eines jungen Raubtiers. (ibid.)

The boy's name is Bobby von Ravin and the rest of his family is less than thrilled by his loud laughter. His mother scolds him and his older brother Gaston pinches him, so that he ends up relegating himself to a corner, his mouth quivering and his fists balled. The noble young Bobby is trying, so it seems, to overcome, for his family's sake, his healthy, exuberant nature.

Bobby's mother, Amelie von Ravin, is a beautiful Latin woman – her beauty is only limited by her ill humour. But Bobby's 'father' – 'dieser unelegante, schwerkranke Mann, dessen Gesichtsfarbe ein Leberleiden verriet' (p. 287) – fits all too well into the ugly atmosphere of decay at the Parisian circus. The narrator makes it clear that Amelie married him for his money – Ravin owns a sugar factory – and that their marriage is far from happy. Ravin's favourite child is Gaston, who has a similar character to himself and whose face resembles his own 'Zug für Zug' (ibid.). Indeed, Gaston looks stereotypically Latin and degenerate: 'ein überaus schwächlicher Junge mit gelber, ungesunder Gesichtsfarbe und melancholisch dunklen Augen' (p. 286). Ravin is less fond of Bobby. Though he is proud when acquaintances remark on Bobby's beauty, the young Teuton, 'dieser rosige Bengel', is too loud and too healthy for his tastes: 'zu maßlos in seinen Ausbrüchen von Lebensfreude' (p. 287).

The infirm Frenchman Ravin is of course not Bobby's real father. Rather, Bobby is the product of Amelie's affair with a blond Swedish officer – a man with whom she had a passionate love affairs. But the officer had to return to his homeland and Amelie refused to accompany him – for climactic, cultural and monetary reasons: 'Nein, es hätte nicht in das Lebensprogramm Amelies gepaßt, mit einem armen, schwedischen Leutnant in sein kaltes Barbarenland zu gehen. Und sie blieb bei Herrn von Ravin, – Zucker *en gros*' (p. 288). Bobby hence becomes something of a souvenir of Amelie's Nordic lover: 'Das Sündenkind wurde geboren, das wunderschöne Sündenkind mit den nordischen goldenen Haaren' (ibid.). But until now, Amelie has cruelly withheld affection from Bobby, giving preference to Gaston. As the narrator asks: 'Liebte sie es so viel mehr, dieses Abbild des legitimen Vaters, oder wollte sie in ihrem Herzen eine Stimme übertönen, welche so flehentlich bat und so herzerreißend zärtlich weinte um das schöne Sündenkind?' (ibid.).

The question is soon answered as Amelie is startled by a shrill cry. It is Gaston, who has fallen into 'Nervenzuckungen' (ibid.) because a clown shot a rifle. The blond Bobby is quick to comfort his cowardly, older brother who, just minutes ago, was pinching him. He puts his arms around Gaston's neck and tells him: 'Weine doch

nicht, Gaston, ich schlage den Kerl tot, wenn er dir was tun will' (ibid.). He balls his fists and his eyes flash 'blaue Blitze' (ibid.), and at this moment, Amelie has a breakthrough: 'Wie gut er ist, wie gut und wie tapfer [...] so gut – und so tapfer wie Er – – – wie Er – – –' (ibid.). She looks at both of her children and asks herself if the degenerate Gaston is not the true product of sin: 'Dieses Kind des Mannes, dem sie für Gold und für einen Ehering ihren jungen Leib verkauft hat, dieses Kind, das heute schon des kranken Vaters Blut in seinen Adern sich regen fühlte! –' (ibid.). All at once, a romantic image of Bobby's race descends upon her: 'das Kind des Einzigen, den sie geliebt, dem sie sich in Liebe geschenkt, – dieses Kind einer anderen Rasse, deren Blut reiner und deren Augen edler waren!' (ibid.). She regards the young Teutonic *Rassenschönheit* amidst all the Parisian children of decadent blood:

Er stand vor ihr in seiner schimmernden, trotzig Knospenschönheit, mitten unter all den Kindern einer überalterten Kultur, mitten unter all diesen blassen, schwachen Knaben und affektierten Mädchen, unter all diesen – aus kühlen, verstandesgemäßen Parisier Ehen entstandenen – Sprößlingen, deren Anzahl, deren 'Ankunftstermin' vorher geregelt worden war. (ibid.)

Then, in a fit of love and tenderness, Amelie pulls Bobby to her and so ends the story.

*Das Sündenkind*, amusing as it is, certainly exhibits strong elements of the Aryan romanticism that preoccupied even some of the best of writers of turn-of-the-century Germany. Yet, as the above passage indicates, the Parisian children may in fact be products of un-Darwinian racial-hygienic conditions more than anything else. As we will later discover, Madeleine also transfers the healthy, regenerative and aesthetic qualities associated here with the Teuton to the Southern French and Italian peasants in such stories as *Glück* (1911) or *Dichterliebe* (1918). The point of contrast is once again the decadent Parisian race. Thus, to what extent *Das Sündenkind* can be regarded as chauvinistic remains unclear. All that is apparent – and all that is of centrality to our understanding of Madeleine's work – are the ways in which various races are employed as atmospheric effects and artistic devices. On a purely aesthetic level, the Teutonic race becomes here an intriguing, exotic anomaly, a flash of light in an atmosphere of dark decay. On a deeper level, Madeleine once again implicates race in a greater argument regarding woman's freedom of erotic choice. In a twist worthy of more liberal contingents of the *Lebensreform*, the beauty of the Teutonic race awakens woman's natural sexual and motherly inclinations, otherwise repressed and perverted by an overly rational, urban society.



### The Chaste Teuton: *Die Königin Kriemhilde* (1913)

The short story *Die Königin Kriemhilde* (1913) presents a similar image of the noble Teutonic race amidst non-Teutonic racial decadence. The protagonist, Maria von Ellingen, is a young, impoverished widow from the Holstein countryside – Langbehn's idealised 'Nether German' homeland. Maria is not only the picture of blond and blue-eyed Teutonic beauty, she is also 'spät entwickelt wie viele norddeutsche Frauen'.<sup>32</sup> On the eve of her first marriage, she was enjoying the 'Taufrische ihrer siebzehnjährigen Blondheit' and it not until she is almost twenty-four that she reaches the pinnacle of her beauty (p. 6). Indeed, according to the racial theory of the day, northern races reach sexual maturity later than southern races,<sup>33</sup> something which was obviously considered a sign of inborn chastity and ethereality as opposed to the animality of southern races. In an earlier Marie Madeleine story, *Aber die Vergangenheit* (1910), this idea is expressed through the character Marie von Sengeberg, whose sensuality is only awakened when she first sees her future husband:

Wie ein Wunder genoß sie das Erwachtsein ihrer Sinne. Ihr norddeutsches Blut, ihre gesunde Art, das stille und einförmige Landleben, das sie immer geführt, hatten ihr in ihrer Entwicklungszeit die Kämpfe erspart, welche so vielen anderen jungen Mädchen die Seele vergifteten.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast, we recall that the young French children of *Das Sündenkind* are prematurely fascinated by sex. According to Albert Friedenthal, the love of a German woman was furthermore deeper and longer lasting and than that of more sensually inclined French and Italian women:

Mag ihr Liebesleben auch weniger leidenschaftlich als das der Südlanderin sein, so ist es doch, wie gesagt, tiefer, inniger, andauernder. Während die Liebe der Romanin plötzlich aufwallt zu hell lodernden Flammen, dann aber oft abbricht und verpufft, ist die der Deutschen, um bei unserem Vergleich zu bleiben, gleich einem unter der Oberfläche unmerklich fortglimmenden Brande, der nie verlöscht.<sup>35</sup>

Friedenthal goes on to profess that the Teutonic female is naturally inclined towards lifelong monogamy, adding that, in the regions of the germanophone world where women are known to be disloyal, such as Berlin or Austria, it is the result of 'starken slawischen Beimischung' (p. 506). Friedenthal's book includes numerous photographs of German women from these regions, which supposedly attest to this 'Beimischung' (figs. 59-62).

<sup>32</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die Königin Kriemhilde* in *Küsse*. Leipzig: Elischer, 1913, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> See Gobineau, *L'essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, pp. 259-60; or Otto Hauser, 'Die Psychologie der Brünetten und der Blondes', pp. 655-64 in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 10, no. 12, 1912, p. 664; or I.w. (Ludwig Woltmann), 'Geschlechtsreife und Rassenanlagen' in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 5, no. 6, 1906, p. 357.

<sup>34</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Aber die Vergangenheit* in *Brennende Liebe*. Leipzig: Elischer, 1910, p. 53.

<sup>35</sup> Friedenthal, *Das Weib im Leben der Völker*, vol. 2, pp. 505-6.



In *Die Königin Kriemhilde*, Madeleine indicates that the same rules apply to German men of Slavic admixture. Maria's new fiancé Count Bronski is an infirm and ageing playboy, the picture of degeneracy:

Er war doch nun schon zweiundfünfzig Jahre alt, von einem Gallensteinleiden gequält und überdies so sehr an die Freiheiten seines Junggesellendaseins gewöhnt. Diese Freiheiten hatten sogar seit dem Tage seiner Mündigkeit das Maß dessen überschritten, was sonst ein Durchschnittseuropäer zu leisten pflegt.<sup>36</sup>

Bronski has a 'farblosen Mund' and 'schmal[e] dunkl[e] Augen' on an 'unregelmäßigen, gelben Gesicht' (p. 5). But one forgives him his decadence and ugliness on account of his noble background; the Bronskis are 'ein so edles, so altes Geschlecht, wie nur die besten im Lande' (p. 5). As their name already betrays, they are of Slavic heritage, and despite considerable German admixture, they all still conform to a Slavic type, 'der sogar mongolische Anklänge aufwies: die ein wenig schräg gestellten Augen, kurze, stumpfe Nasen, und hohe Backenknochen' (p. 6).

This idea of the 'Mongoloid' eyes of the Slav resounds in other literary works, most famously in Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924), in which the seductive 'Kirgisenaugen' of the Slavic-German Pribislav Hippe and the Russian Clawdia Chauchat beguile the young Hans Castorp. But the motif can be traced back to at least the middle of the nineteenth century, around the dawn of racial theory. In *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht* (1852), for instance, Willibald Alexis presents a Russian princess with 'breiter als europäisch geschlitzten Augen'<sup>37</sup> and two years before the publication of Madeleine's story, Grete Meisel-Hess had already applied the motif to old Berlin families. In *Die Intellektuellen* (1911), she portrays a Berlin woman who has 'lebhaft, graue Augen, deren äußere Winkel etwas schräg gestellt waren und einen wendischen Einschlag im Blute verrieten, dem man in alten Berliner Familien oft begegnet'.<sup>38</sup> Around the same time, Albert Friedenthal even went to the extent of providing his readers with a visual aid that demonstrates progressively more Asiatic physiognomies, from a German woman of Slavic admixture, who has slightly elongated eyes, to a full-fledged Mongolian woman with the unmistakable Mongolian fold (fig. 63). It seems that in turn-of-the-century consciousness, slanted eyes were an emblem of Slaviness, just as the hooked nose was an emblem of Jewishness.

In *Die Königin Kriemhilde*, however, Madeleine works with a unilaterally negative vision of the Slavic physiognomy and character – atypical for her work, as we will discover in the next chapter. The Slavic-Mongolian features are particularly

<sup>36</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die Königin Kriemhilde in Küsse*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>37</sup> Willibald Alexis, *Werke [Vaterländische Romane]*, vol. 7. Berlin: Otto Janke, ca. 1890, p. 223.

<sup>38</sup> Grete Meisel-Hess, *Die Intellektuellen. Roman*. Berlin: Oesterheld & Co., 1911, p. 216.

pronounced in Count Bronski's face, which prompts the narrator's remark: 'Ja, seiner Schönheit wegen war er gewiß nie geliebt worden!' (p. 6). It is thus fitting that Bronski is also the most sensual, decadent and nihilistic member of his clan. He is described as having the mouth of a 'Welt- und Menschenverächters' (p. 5) and, in the company of a mistress, as having a look that mockingly says: 'Nun, Ihr vornehmen Damen, wollt Ihr mir trotzdem noch immer Eure jungfräulichen Töchter zum Ehrengemahl anbieten?' (p. 5). Other members of the Bronski clan are not much better. Indeed, gathered together in their opera box, they are the picture of racial degeneracy. Guido has two nephews 'deren schwächliche Eleganz im Frack besonders zur Geltung kam' (p.8). One of his brothers is an over-enthusiastic gambler while his youngest brother has a 'frühzeitig verfetteten Körper' (ibid.). The blond Maria is with the Bronski clan at this moment and it is here that Marie Madeleine offers another surreal image of racial contrasts, of *Rassenschönheit* amidst inglorious, racial chaos. The parallels with the ending of *Das Sündenkind* could not be more apparent:

Inmitten all dieser verknitterten slavischen Gesichter mit den schmalen, dunklen Augen, den stumpfen Nasen und den hohen Backenknochen erschien das wundervolle Oval von Marias Gesicht noch vornehmer als sonst. Inmitten all dieser schwarzhaarigen Grafen flammte das Blond von Marias Haaren noch goldener als sonst.

Inmitten all dieser kleinen, zu schwächtigen oder zu fetten Gestalten prangte das vollendete Ebenmaß ihres Leibes. Aus dem einfachen, weißen Kleide ragten ihre weißen, vollen Schultern und ihr schlanker Hals empor, – die hochgeschwungenen Lippen ihres Mundes blühten und prunkten so still wie schöne Blumen es tun, blühten so ruhig, doppelt so schön neben all den von Leidenschaften gezeichneten, farblosen Mündern der Grafen Bronski.

Und der purpurrote Sammet der Loge gab den richtigen Hintergrund für das seltsame Bild. (p. 9)

Count Bronski himself tells Maria, 'wie die schönste Königin, die blonde Königin Kriemhild sitzt du hier unter uns schwarzen Hunnen' (p. 15), and thus reveals the meaning of the story's title. Bronski is referring to the Medieval German epic *Das Nibelungenlied*, which, through Wagner's operatic rendition, had become an everyday aspect of German culture by the turn of the century. Queen Kriemhild, who had been married to the murdered hero Siegfried, is remarried years later to King Etzel – otherwise known as Atilla the Hun – and lives with him in Hungary, where she plans her revenge on Siegfried's murderer Hagen. Race plays absolutely no role in *Das Nibelungenlied*, but in the course of the nineteenth century, the epic was increasingly seen in a nationalistic light as a testimony of German strength and bravery amidst foreign terror. The characters Kriemhild and Siegfried in particular became emblems of Teutonic racial virtues.

Guido's comment haunts Maria. She thinks to herself reproachfully: 'Die Königin Kriemhild, die des häßlichen Hunnenkönig Etzels Weib ward, als Siegfried

gestorben war. Siegfried, der lachende Held, der sonnenblonde.....' (p. 16). For the first time in a while she recalls her first husband, 'ihren sonnenblonden Schatz' (p. 17) – a handsome Teuton like herself – and realises that she will never again be as happy as when he first kissed her.

### **The Teutonic Nobleman: Ottheinrich of Rasse (1911)**

Class was often analogous to race in turn-of-the-century consciousness. Gobineau and his followers argued that the European nobility had a larger proportion of Aryan blood than the lower classes, the former being descended more clearly from Indo-European and Teutonic conquerors. Poesche attempted to justify this with the supposed fact that 'der alte deutsche Adel ohne Ausnahme noch gegenwärtig blaue Augen hat'.<sup>39</sup> The idea was also that Aryan peoples, starting with Vedic India, tended to set up rigid caste systems in which the conquered, darker-skinned peoples were relegated to the lower caste, while the upper castes – the noble warriors and priests – strove for racial purity. Thus, coupled with the notion of the varying degree of Aryan and non-Aryan racial stock in the classes of Europe, there was also a more general conception of the lower classes as genetically mixed and the upper classes as incestuous, regardless of what racial make-up was involved.

Such conceptions become relevant to the literature of the day because inbreeding or lack thereof was thought to exercise a remarkable influence on both appearance and character. Albert Reibmayr, for instance, argued that incestuous peoples, such as orthodox Jews, ancient Egyptians or Brahmins, have an inborn politically conservative, inflexible character whereas non-incestuous peoples tend to be more liberal in nature.<sup>40</sup> In a passage that seems downright hilarious to the contemporary reader, Reibmayr maintains that the former chancellor Bismarck incorporates both elements in his inborn character:

Väterlicherseits altes Aristokratenblut, war seine Mutter eine Bürgerliche [...] Neigte Bismarck vermöge seines väterlichen Erbblutes mehr zur konservativen Seite, so brachte das liberale mütterliche Bürgerblut den genial beweglichen Zug in seinen politischen Charakter, so dass sich beide Richtungen im gesunden harmonischen Gleichmaass [sic] hielten. (p. 33)

Whether Madeleine subscribed to such theories is not at all clear but it is certain that, in her writing, the various social classes in Germany become castes of sorts, with differing genetic material and corresponding differences in appearance and temperament. Stereotypes apply here just as they do to various races – and so does Madeleine's ambiguous stance. All classes, it seems, are equally dubious. At times,

<sup>39</sup> Poesche, *Die Arier*, p. 212.

<sup>40</sup> Albert Reibmayr, 'Über den Einfluß der Inzucht und Vermischung auf den politischen Charakter einer Bevölkerung', pp. 21-37 in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1902, p. 29.

refined aristocratic blood seems superior to coarse peasant blood, at other times the oft romanticised 'regenerating' peasant blood would seem to triumph over 'fatigued' aristocratic blood.

In the short story *Rasse* (1911), written in diary form, a young woman, Anna Krause, looks forward to marrying a handsome and impoverished young nobleman by the name of Ottheinrich von Weidenberg. She herself is of petty bourgeois background, though her father grew rich through hard work. At the beginning of the story, the young Anna compares various species of living things, determining the normal variety and the noble variety, the 'Edelrasse'. First she regards everyday rambling roses, remarking that they look like 'das Ideal des sozialdemokratischen Zukunftsstaats'.<sup>41</sup> As a contrast, Anna admires larger, individual roses, which, according to the gardener, are an 'Edelrasse' (p. 106). Next she regards some ugly workhorses and compares them with her thoroughbreds, of which she proclaims 'Edelrasse!' (p. 106.). Finally, she regards her own father, with his short, stooped figure, his work-worn hands and his face with 'der breiten Nase' while he speaks to Anna's aristocrat fiancé. As Anna looks to the latter, with his narrow hands, his golden hair and his chiselled features, her heart cries 'Edelrasse!' (p. 107).

There is one person, however, who is not particularly happy about Anna's impending marriage – her young neighbour and childhood sweetheart Fritz Küpers, also of petty bourgeois background. He confronts Anna about her plans, mentions Ottheinrich's debts and his reputation as a reckless womaniser. But Anna remains untroubled – on account of Ottheinrich's race: 'Seine Liebessünden verzeih ich gern. Herrenrecht. Und daß er Schulden machte?... er ist eben nicht dazu geschaffen, zu markten und zu rechnen wie ein Krämer. Der leichte Sinn gehört zum Herrenblut' (p. 112). Anna then goes on a tirade against money, claiming that anyone is capable of having it, from charlatans and thieves to prostitutes, but that noble race cannot be bought. She then considers herself. She has been raised like a princess, has a fine stature, a sound mind and a good sense of morality, but nothing, she claims, can erase the fact that she is 'niederer Rasse' (ibid.). Although she qualifies as a 'hübsche Blondine' and people call her a 'vornehme Erscheinung', she knows that the ridge of her nose is not high enough and that her wrists and ankles are too wide (ibid.). She asks herself if Ottheinrich has noticed this, then consoles herself with the idea that love is blind and will help her and Ottheinrich to get past conflicts that could arise on account of the 'Verschiedenheit' of their 'Abstammung' (ibid.). She furthermore writes that her children will be obligated to thank her for having chosen Ottheinrich

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<sup>41</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Rasse* in *Die heiligsten Güter*, vol. 1. Leipzig: Elischer: 1911, p. 105.

as their father. Ultimately, she even espouses selective breeding amongst humans in the same terms as the German racial hygienists of her day: ‘Soll man denn nur bei Hunden und Pferden Wert auf Zuchtmaterial legen, und beim Menschen, der “Krone der Schöpfung”, sollen die Eltern sich wegen Geldinteressen zusammenfinden oder wegen “geistiger Übereinstimmung”’ (p. 114). The result of not selectively breeding, writes Anna, would be that thousands of young people would end up like her childhood sweetheart Fritz Küpers, ‘der militärdienstuntauglich ist wegen zu kleinem Brustmaß und zu großer Kurzsichtigkeit!’ (ibid.).

To observe just how closely Anna’s ponderings correspond to the racial theory of the day, we need look no further than to Wilser’s article ‘Zuchtwahl beim Menschen’ (1902), which advocates a state-monitored, human breeding program in which sickly people, incorrigible criminals and sexual deviants would not be allowed to marry. Wilser cites the following entreaty from the magazine ‘Jung-Deutschland’:

Es giebt Vereine zur Züchtung reiner Pferderassen, reiner Hunderassen, ja sogar reiner Schweinerassen. Hat jemand wohl schon etwas von der Züchtung reiner Menschenrassen, in unserm Falle von der Züchtung eines reinen deutschen Edel-Volkes gehört?  
 Wäre dies nicht naheliegender, nicht notwendiger, nicht klüger gehandelt als die Züchtung reiner Schweinerassen? O du deutsches, du erstes Volk, wache auf und bedenke deine Zukunft, bedenke, daß von dir noch viel erwartet wird!<sup>42</sup>  
 Anna, however, is in for some disappointment with her thoroughbred husband.

If she hoped that he would give up his reckless spending and philandering once they were married, she was wrong. Even during their honeymoon on the Riviera, Ottheinrich attempts to rekindle his relationship with a former lover, who also happens to be his cousin – a ‘Rasseweib’ from the Austrian side of the Weidenberg house (p. 119). Ottheinrich also gambles away a great deal of Anna’s money, and at one point, he stays out the whole night, only to return disgustingly drunk the next morning. Anna is enraged, but when she attempts to confront him about his misdeeds, Ottheinrich refuses to take her seriously. He claims that, since their marriage, he has been faithful, and as far as gambling is concerned: ‘das Jeu ist jedem Kavalier erlaubt, dabei kann kein Mensch was finden, und wenn jemand dabei was findet, dann ist er kein Mensch, sonder ein Spießbürger!’ (p. 129).

Ottheinrich appears to settle down after they return to Germany, though Anna continues to detect a hint of class condescension in his attitude towards her. Hypocritically, he makes dismissive remarks about other aristocrats who married or even befriended perfectly worthy people below their class. Soon enough, Anna ends up reconsidering her enthusiasm for the noble race:

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<sup>42</sup> Wilser, ‘Zuchtwahl beim Menschen’, p. 181.



Und ich, die ich so sehr, so ausschließlich für die Edelfasse der Aristokratie geschwärmt, bäume mich jetzt auf gegen diese einseitige und engherzige Auffassung, – gegen diese Anbetung der alleinseligmachenden Abstammung gegen diese prinzipielle Verachtung von Genie, Fleiß, Streben..... (p. 132). She considers her gardener, who seems to be a responsible and caring married man, and asks herself who is truly of better race, the gardener or Ottheinrich. Ultimately, she experiences true desperation when she believes that Ottheinrich has impregnated her maid. She leaves Ottheinrich's residence to stay with her parents – much to her husband's confusion. Only by chance does Anna discover that the maid had been sleeping with the gardener, not Ottheinrich. Thus, her temporarily romantic conception of the peasant, the honest, loyal man of the *Volk*, whom she considered 'weit entfernt [...] von der Korruptiertheit der vornehmen Kaste' (p. 142), is happily shattered and she returns to her husband, whom she now loves more than ever.

The next conflict arises when one of Ottheinrich's cousins, another reckless member of German nobility, ends up getting very drunk and gambling away eighty thousand Marks in one evening. Anna and Ottheinrich are currently sojourning at Anna's father's house and Ottheinrich asks his bourgeois father-in-law to pay his cousins' debts. But old Krause refuses, so that Ottheinrich scornfully walks away. This is enough to send Anna back into doubts about her husband and the 'Edelfasse'. She remains sceptical about the peasant race but starts to feel a certain affinity for her own, bourgeois race, so that she regrets not having married Fritz after all: 'Aber Fritz..... dieser Typ des deutschen Bürgertums: sein zuverlässiges Wesen, seine Arbeitsamkeit und Ehrlichkeit, seine Ehrenhaftigkeit und Treue, – – – das ist der Mann, der Glück für ein Leben bietet' (p. 149). She even considers getting a divorce.

But days later, Anna's new enthusiasm for the bourgeoisie is also shattered and her reactivated disappointment with the 'Edelfasse' gives way once more to adoration. Still on a visit to Anna's father, Anna and Ottheinrich end up taking a motorboat ride with Fritz. As the knowledgeable chauffeur is not present, the boiler of the motorboat ends up exploding and the boat bursts into flames. Anna cries out – but her voice is drowned out by the even louder cries of Fritz. Only Ottheinrich keeps his presence of mind, first trying to put out the flames, and when this fails, bravely taking Anna with him into the water, although they are far away from the shore. As Anna writes: 'Seine Augen sahen weitgeöffnet und furchtlos hinein in den Tod' (p. 151). Fritz, meanwhile, continues to cry pitifully for help. All are saved in the end, but after this episode, Fritz has fallen from grace once and for all. Anna is disgusted with his bourgeois cowardice and goes back to loving her husband and his brave 'Edelfasse'. Days later, she discovers that she is pregnant and her marital bliss seems to reach its apex.



But the story is not over yet. A month later, the restless Ottheinrich gets himself into mischief once again. When he returns from a visit to Hamburg, Anna receives a letter from a certain female ‘Kreatur’ who is intent on taking revenge on Ottheinrich for some reason (p. 154). The letter gives Anna all the sordid details of how her husband spent her money with a few friends in Hamburg’s notorious harbour district. When she shows Ottheinrich the letter, he turns red with rage, tears it in half and declares, ‘Ekelhaft!’ (p. 154) But when Anna asks him to swear that the contents of the letter are not true, Ottheinrich turns pale and says: ‘Ich gebe in solchen Sachen kein Ehrenwort!’ (p. 154).

Anna’s marital bliss has once again disappeared but this time, she knows that she will stay with Ottheinrich, whom she still loves: ‘Ich werde weiter lieben, weiter unglücklich sein’ (p. 155). She decides that she will console herself with the image of Ottheinrich’s noble bravery. As Anna writes, the ‘Edelrasse’ may be imperfect but its members know how to stare death in the face: ‘Daß er sich bewährte in der Gefahr, – die Art, wie er dem Tod ins Auge sah, – in diesem einen hat mich seine Rasse nicht betrogen: sie verstehen zu sterben diese Leute!’ (p. 155). She thinks of the French Revolution, of the king and the nobility who had all gone soft and immoral but were nonetheless brave in the face of death. To prove her point, Anna refers to the Duchess Du Barry, who was a ‘große Dame’ for decades but, in her ignoble fear of the guillotine, went back to what she was before she shared the king’s bed: ‘die Tochter von Anne Bêqus, ein Kind der Gosse, ein Proletarierweib, das halbtot vor Angst um Hilfe brüllte, als der Henker ihr naht’ (p. 156). As a proletarian woman, Anne Bêqus did not know how to die: ‘Sie konnte nicht sterben wie die von der Edelrasse, von der Rasse, zu der auch Ottheinrich gehört!’ (p. 156). Anna’s only regret now is that life does not consist merely of such big moments, that ‘Heldenmut’ and ‘Todesverachtung’ are not the only qualities that life requires – that ‘Ethik’ and ‘Moral’ also make demands (p. 154).

The idea here, an ironic nod to Nietzsche, is of the aristocrat as a noble but amoral creature – a ‘prachtvolle nach Beute und Sieg lüstern schweifende blonde Bestie’.<sup>43</sup> In Ottheinrich, we furthermore observe the ‘Geist der Zerfahrenheit’ of the Teutonic race, as suggested by Neupauer, who felt that the Teutons were strong and beautiful but reckless and frivolous. Ottheinrich conforms to the idea of the happy-go-lucky, gambling and courageous Indo-European – of the Rig Veda or of Norse legend – whom racial theorists of the nineteenth century also found in their over-enthusiastic reading of the Roman historian Tacitus’s *Germania*. Both Gobineau and

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<sup>43</sup> Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral in Werke in drei Bänden*, vol. 2., p. 786.

Chamberlain felt that this stylised, methodical exercise in Roman dialectics was a truthful portrayal of the original, racially pure Germans. Tacitus presented the ancient Germans as brave, noble warriors who nonetheless have an inclination towards laziness:

Wenn sie nicht zu Felde ziehen, verbringen sie viel Zeit mit Jagen, mehr noch mit Nichtstun, dem Schlafen und Essen ergeben. Gerade die Tapfersten und Kriegslustigsten rühren sich nicht. Die Sorge für Haus, Hof und Feld bleibt den Frauen, den alten Leuten und allen Schwachen im Hauswesen überlassen; sie selber faulenzten. Ein seltsamer Widerspruch ihres Wesens: dieselben Menschen lieben so sehr das Nichtstun und hassen zugleich die Ruhe.<sup>44</sup>

Among Tacitus's Germans it is even considered lazy and cowardly to work for something that can be gained through bloodshed. In a sense, this also summarises the behaviour of Ottheinrich, who does not work himself but feels that any sum of money from his bourgeois wife and father-in-law should belong to him – and for whatever improper, pleasurable purposes he chooses. Tacitus, it should be mentioned, also portrays the Germans as born gamblers:

Das Würfelspiel betreiben sie seltsamerweise in voller Nüchternheit, ganz wie ein ernsthaftes Geschäft; ihre Leidenschaft im Gewinnen und Verlieren ist so hemmungslos, daß sie, wenn sie alles verspielt haben, mit dem äußersten und letzten Wurf um die Freiheit und ihren eigenen Leib kämpfen. (p. 19)

This passage was well known in turn-of-the-century Germany and Madeleine's husband makes reference to it in a section on gambling in his *Patriotische Nörgeleien* (1907), after stating, 'gerade die germanischen Völker waren als leidenschaftliche Spieler bekannt'.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, most Germans of the nobility in Marie Madeleine's stories have an inclination towards gambling and, true to Tacitus, most also see their true calling in the splendour of the most decorative branch of the military – or, if they have the means to do so, in simply enjoying the fruits of other people's toil. Though they would not hesitate to give their life on the battlefield, most have a strong contempt for work and a profound ambivalence regarding the dutiful 'Krautjunker' existence – the management of the family farm-estate – which awaits many of them after their military career. Such is the ongoing dilemma of the impoverished Bärenklau family in Madeleine's novella *Arme Ritter* (1904), for example.

### **The Inbred Decadent Teuton: *Prinz Christian* (1908)**

In turn-of-the-century consciousness, Teutonic purity in too great a quantity could be just as dubious as mixed race. The Teutonic inbred exhibits many of the same traits as the mixed-race aesthete in the work of Madeleine and her

<sup>44</sup> Tacitus, *Germania* (translated into the German by Manfred Fuhrmann). Stuttgart: Reclam, 1971, p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> Heinrich von Puttkamer, *Patriotische Nörgeleien*. Leipzig / Berlin / Paris: Grethlein & Co., 1907, p. 86.

contemporaries – for opposite reasons. The mixed-race aesthete is sickly, nervous, effeminate, artistic and sensual on account of conflicting racial elements. Though he exhibits a few quirks of his own, the Teutonic inbred is more or less the same on account of over-refined racial elements. Thus, decadent aesthetes in turn-of-the-century literature are often portrayed as either racially mixed or inbred. Cesare Lombroso, for instance, believed that genius, supposedly a product of degeneration, could result from both racial mixture and incest.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, just as the olive complexion and dark, melancholy eyes of the Latin race could become signs of illness and degeneration – as we have already seen in *Das Sündenkind* – so could the pallor and the narrow stature of inbred Teutons. As a result of the unhealthy concentration of his Teutonic racial elements, the Teutonic inbred's physiognomy is all the more handsome and Aryan-looking, but his body lacks the strength and vitality of a Siegfried or a Clovis.

A classic example of such a figure is the protagonist of Marie Madeleine's *Prinz Christian* (1909), a playful satire of the German aristocrat lost in Paris. The title character's inbred lineage is established at the beginning:

Es sprach sich wohl eine überalterte Rasse in seiner Erscheinung aus, eine Rasse, die – geschwächt durch jahrhundertlanges Wohlleben und durch zu häufige Inzucht – diesem Sprossen nicht genug mehr von jenem roten und kostbaren Saft gegeben hatten, der Leben heißt.....<sup>47</sup>

This is an unsubtle nod to the opening of Joris-Karl Huysmans' *À rebours* (1884), the protagonist of which, Des Esseintes, is the effeminate offspring of a noble French family that has degenerated through incestuous marriages:

La décadence de cette ancienne maison avait, sans nul doute, suivi régulièrement son cours; l'effémation des mâles était allée en s'accroissant; comme pour achever l'œuvre des âges, les des Esseintes marièrent, pendant deux siècles, leurs enfants entre eux, usant leur reste de vigueur dans les unions consanguines.<sup>48</sup>

Like all enthusiasts of French decadence, Madeleine was likely to have been familiar with this passage.

Prince Christian's inbred personality was already apparent when he was a child. He was filled with 'einer Unlust zum Leben' (p. 11) and often used to say: 'Ich möchte ja so gern sterben, Mama [...] Ich bin zu faul zum Leben, Mama' (ibid.). However, these periods of lethargy have always interchanged with periods of 'gierigen Lebensverlangens' (ibid.), which were particularly pronounced when the handsome Christian was an adolescent. At this point in his young life, he had an

<sup>46</sup> See Cesare Lombroso, *Der Einfluß von Rasse und Freiheit auf das Genie*, pp. 948-950 in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 2, no. 12, 1904, p. 949.

<sup>47</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Prinz Christian* in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 2, p. 10.

<sup>48</sup> Joris-Karl Huysmans, *À rebours*. Paris: Flammarion, 1978, p. 61.

affair with a circus performer, with whom he absconded for six weeks, and then with the mother of a schoolmate.

Christian's appearance is typical of the inbred Teutons in the work of Madeleine and her contemporaries. He is 'zu schmal' for his height and the 'etwas zarte Färbung' of his 'schmalen Gesichtes' corresponds to that of his deceased father, who was of course consumptive (p. 10). The handsome Christian is tremendously popular among women and yet: 'einen Mangel an Vitalität hätte man seiner Erscheinung allenfalls vorwerfen können' (ibid.). There is too little 'Ausdruck' in his large, dark-blue eyes and the corners of his 'genußsüchtig geformten' mouth are 'zu hängend' (ibid.). Meanwhile, other family members in higher positions are equally inbred and infirm, so that Christian is actually close to receiving the family throne of 'Hachingen-Büttendorf'. His cousin, the governing prince Eberwyn Ernst, is childless and the next heir before Christian is Eberwyn Ernst's brother, Eberwyn Karl, who suffers from a 'Gehirnaffektion' (p. 9), which entails paranoia and not recognising people, so that he may not be fit to rule. Eberwyn Karl currently lives in 'Schloß Schwanstein' (ibid.), an unmistakable reference to the eccentric and inbred King Ludwig II of Bavaria.

At the beginning of the novella, Christian, who is pursuing a military career as befits a German nobleman, has been transferred from the cuirassiers in Berlin to a remote regiment in 'Hochdorf' (somewhere in Southern Germany) as a punishment for his life of debauchery. According to his new commanding officer, Christian had 'Schulden wie Heu', gambled 'wie ein Ratze', sat around in night locales and showed himself with women (p. 12). The commanding officer furthermore disapproves of Christian's effeminate and foppish appearance: 'Also denke dir einen langen, schlanken, schlappen Kerl mit einem Gesicht wie ein Mädels. Einen Hemdkragen hat er, der zwei Zoll über den Uniformkragen raussieht; – einen kleinen Säbel hat er, so klein wie die Lampe da, – jawohl, völlig unvorschriftsmäßig' (ibid.).

Christian has a mixed effect on the residents of Hochdorf. His generally blasé, even cold attitude offends. But his good looks and interesting mind intrigue. Like other inbred Teutons, Christian is very receptive to art. At a dinner party, where he at first seems bored and irritated, the singing of one of the guests wakes him up from his typical lethargy and ushers him into a blissful reverie:

Seine stumpfe Teilnahmslosigkeit war wie fortgeweht.  
Mit leidenschaftlicher Spannung lauschte er dem Gesange. Es war, als ob er die kristallklaren Töne in sich hineintränke, es war, als ob sie ein Zaubersant  
wären, der sein allzu blasses Blut heißer durch die Adern pulsieren ließ. (p. 16)  
Christian suddenly becomes very lively and talkative, discussing music with the other guests in a very refined manner. As it turns out, he plays the piano with considerable

talent, is knowledgeable regarding modern literature and interior design and also paints on occasion.

The idea of the inbred as artistically inclined was nothing new to turn-of-the-century culture, and it was Huysmans' character Des Esseintes who provided something of the archetype. But Germany had its own, real-life inbred art aficionado – the aforementioned King Ludwig II of Bavaria, who was never so enthusiastic as when he was expounding on the beauty of Wagner's music.

As the reader can imagine, Christian does not last long in Hochdorf. After he causes a scandal by keeping a Berlin actress at his house for several days, he decides to quit the service and journey to Paris, where he intends to lead the life of a playboy, despite the strongest objections of his mother and his cousin, the governing prince. He cannot wait to leave Hochdorf and get out into 'das bunte, rauschende, häßliche, schöne, schöne Leben' (p. 57).

Once in Paris, what impresses Christian the most is 'die erotische Seite des Lebens' (p. 57), which is much more pronounced in France than in Germany. But it is the atmosphere, not individual people, which Christians enjoys. His over-refined senses are unimpressed by the *Rassenschönheit* of the French women: 'Die stechenden Augen und scharfen Nasen, welche die französischen Weiber so oft haben, liebte er gar nicht. Auch fand er sie in der Mehrzahl zu schwächig' (p. 57). He maintains an aristocratic distance from the majority of the people he interacts with, nonetheless revelling in all that Parisian culture and nightlife has to offer. In the end, however, he finds it necessary to forego his aristocratic pretensions in favour of money. His life of debauchery in Paris is simply too costly for the salary he receives from his mother, so that he ends up taking a large sum of money from the director of a South African ruby company, who wishes to have Christian's illustrious name on the board of directors. This in turn leads to Christian's removal from the throne succession, so that all of his myriad creditors begin demanding immediate repayment. The ruby company, meanwhile, turns out to be a fraud. With no remaining salary and astronomical debts, the handsome Christian heeds the council of a friend and seduces one of the richest women in Paris, the young, clever and beautiful Marie Harris, the humbly-born German widow of an American millionaire. As virtuous as Christian is debauched, Marie has been donating a great deal of her riches to good causes. But like other women in the novel, she promptly falls in love Christian – primarily because of his good looks. The novel closes with a forced happy ending as the guilt-ridden Christian reveals his calculating intentions to Marie, who forgives him automatically and loves him all the more in light of his sudden sensitivity.



### **The Inbred and the Peasant: *Eheleute* (1915)**

Marie Madeleine's collection of war stories also includes a token inbred aristocrat. In *Eheleute* (1915), the Franconian nobleman Captain Paul Geltow stands in stark contrast to his peasant wife, Sophie Hasselbach; as in *Rasse*, the aristocracy and the peasantry are treated as two separate races:

Es war schwerfälliges Bauernblut, das in ihren Adern floß. Er aber, der Sproß einer uralten fränkischen Adelsfamilie, die durch viele Verwandtenehen überzüchtet war, hatte gefühlsmäßig eine Abneigung und eine Abwehr gegen ihre Art. (p. 184)

Though both Geltow and his wife are Germans, their inborn features could not be more divergent. Sophie, an 'üppige Blondine'<sup>49</sup> with blue eyes (p. 184), is clearly a Teuton but as a peasant, she is characterised as sturdy and blossoming; it is a 'derbe, blühende Schönheit' (p. 183). Geltow on the other hand is 'ein wenig blaß' and has a 'feines Gesicht' that displays 'unverkennbar einen Leidenszug' (p. 181). He furthermore exhibits the tall, overly thin body characteristic of the Teutonic inbred. At one point, the narrator also documents the psychological contrasts between Paul, the artistic inbred, and Sophie, the pragmatic peasant, in detail:

Er hatte einen großen Interessenkreis, zu groß fast für einen Soldaten, der seine Kraft nicht zu sehr zersplittern soll.

Er hatte alle möglichen künstlerischen und wissenschaftlichen Neigungen und eine bemerkenswert gesteigerte, ein wenig krankhafte Reizbarkeit der Nerven. Sie aber besaß sehr wenig Empfänglichkeit für geistige Genüsse. Sie war von geringer Begabung. Ihre liebste Tätigkeit war, in Haus und Hof herumzuarbeiten. (pp. 183-4)

Their marriage seems to have come about because of the romantic image Geltow once had of Sophie. One day, he saw her working in her garden and fell into a reverie: 'Seine idealisierende Art hatte sie dann sofort, in nachempfindlicher Dilettantenweise zu klassischen Vorbildern emporgehoben' (p. 184). As they got to know each other, Paul read a spiritual depth into Sophie's blue eyes that did not truly exist:

Daß sie auf seine Gespräche nicht einging, war ihm weiter nicht aufgefallen. Es genügte ja vollständig, wenn sie als Antwort auf seine Schwärmerei ihn ansah mit großen, blauen, unschuldigen Augen.

Meistens schwieg sie ihm gegenüber, und er legte sich das Schweigen nach seinen Wünschen aus, vermutete all die geistige Regsamkeit und die Gemühtiefe in ihr, die er sich wünschte für seine Lebensgefährtin.— (ibid.)

Consequently, their marriage is disappointing for both of them. Geltow is soon confronted with the truth about Sophie's peasant nature. What he once regarded as 'mädchenhafte Zurückhaltung' he now sees as 'Stumpfsinn' (ibid.). Meanwhile, Sophie finds little romance in Geltow's inbred nervousness: 'Und sie, die früher anbetend zu ihm aufgesehen, die ohne ihn verstehen zu können, ihn doch bewundert

<sup>49</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Eheleute* in ...und muß Abschied nehmen in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 2, p. 182.



hatte, fand in diesem gereizten, mürrischen Manne nicht mehr den Helden ihrer Träume' (ibid.). Ultimately, the two end up separating – but are brought back together by the war, for Sophie ends up visiting Paul as he prepares his squadron at a health resort. With death on the front as a strong possibility for Geltow, the two rediscover their love and realise that if Paul returns, they will begin a new life together. Thus, the patriotic message seems to be that all Germans – of both of the aristocratic and the peasants races – must learn to overcome their differences and unite in face of the foreign menace. As in *Entsühnt*, there is a sense of war as a strong, purifying force, cleaning up the decadence of the turn of the century. Sickly inbreds are put to the test, racially healthy relationships are put back together and unhealthy relationships with lush, Latin-blooded women are broken up. As the narrator remarks in another of these war stories, *Hauptmann Leonhart*: 'Dann kam der Krieg, der große Sturm, der über Deutschland dahinbrauste, daß alles Morsche, Angefaulte zerstob, – daß alles Wurzelkräftige sich stolzer noch als vorher dem Licht entgegenreckte.'<sup>50</sup>

### ***Die sterbenden Perlen (1921)***

The topos of the inbred, German aristocrat reaches its apex in Marie Madeleine's late short story *Die sterbenden Perlen*, which narrates the dilemma of a childless couple of the German high nobility. Prince Albrecht, aged thirty-five, has been married to his cousin, Margarete Amelia since he was twenty-one. Both come from incestuous families and have stereotypically inbred, Teutonic physiognomies:

Sie waren beide sehr groß, überschlang, mit Haaren, die wie helles Gold schimmerten, mit schmalen Gesichtern, die sehr blaß waren. Schwere Lider, die müde herunterhängen, verdeckten ein wenig die blauen Augen. Sie waren beide schöne Erscheinungen, aber so matt, - so blutlos. Es war, als verlösche die Lebenskraft in diesen Sprossen einer durch jahrhundertelange Inzucht überzüchteten Familie.<sup>51</sup>

Albrecht and Margarete love one another deeply – but primarily, it seems, because they are racially so similar:

Sie empfanden sich körperlich als so verwandt, daß sie sich mit einer wahren Selbstverständlichkeit liebten. Sie beide, - das hieß dasselbe Blut, dieselbe Rasse und, aus dieser Gleichartigkeit herauswachsend, dieselben Neigungen und Lebensanschauungen. (ibid.)

Like Thomas Mann's Jewish siblings in *Wälsungenblut*, they prefer each other's company, both spiritual and sexual, to that of everyone else. Indeed, Albrecht and Margarete are often taken for siblings and the narrator likens the situation to ancient

<sup>50</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Hauptmann Leonhart* in ...und muß Abschied nehmen, p. 202.

<sup>51</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die sterbenden Perlen* in *Von der Untreue. Novellen*. Leipzig: Elischer, 1921, p. 197.

Egypt, where pharaohs married their own sisters ‘weil nur dasselbe Blut ihnen edel genug war, um sich damit zu verbinden’ (ibid.).

Since the collection in which *Die sterbenden Perlen* was published is titled *Von der Untreue*, it is clear that this blissful autoeroticism will not last forever. In an unsubtle metaphor for their race, the infertile inbreds possess a century-old pearl necklace, on which, much to their dismay, the pearls are looking ever duller. Their marshal, however, informs them that there is a rare type of skin that has a beneficial effect on ‘sick’ pearls – something which science cannot yet fully explain, though it probably has something to do with the skin’s salt content (p. 206). He then informs them that there is only one person in the world who is known to be capable of wearing all pearls back into health. She is ‘La bella Estrella’, a famed cabaret dancer.

At this point, any reader at all familiar with Marie Madeleine can easily guess how the story will unfold. Prince Albrecht will eventually contact La bella Estrella, though only after initial distaste at the thought of such a woman carrying the family heirloom. Then he will end up desiring her. Still, some of the specifics of this predictable plot line are of interest to our study.

As it turns out, La bella Estrella is the mother of several children and has a mysterious, though distinctively non-Teutonic and non-aristocratic lineage. The marshal, who has seen her perform, reports: ‘Manche sagten, sie sei eine russische Jüdin. Andere behaupten, eine spanische Zigeunerin. Jedenfalls aber aus der Hefe des Volkes’ (p. 211). Portentously, he adds: ‘Mein Gott, nie wieder habe ich etwas so Lebensprühendes gesehn!’ (ibid.). When the marshal reveals that La bella Estrella is no great talent but simply full of wild character, ‘diese Raubtierwildheit eines Panthers’, a look of disgust settles around Albrechts ‘fein[e] Nasenflügel’ (ibid.). Nonetheless, on a trip to Paris, primarily to acquire a new type of orchid – like Des Esseintes of *À rebours*, he is an amateur of exotic flowers – Albrecht pays a visit to the cabaret where La bella Estrella has been performing. Here he beholds her luscious, swarthy body adorned with scanty cloth and numerous pearls, which become egg-like symbols of her fertility:

auf der bronzebraunen Haut der halbnackten Brust lagen die Perlenreihen [...]. Perlen trug sie um den Hals und in den Ohrläppchen, um die Arme gewunden und durch das blauschwarze Gelock geschlungen, das sich um das klassische Oval ihres Gesichtes bauschte. (p. 217)

Her erotic dancing meets with ecstatic applause and awakens heavy, conflicting feelings in Albrecht: ‘Er fühlte sich stark abgestoßen und doch auch wieder machtvoll angezogen von diesem schönen, wilden, frechen Weibe [...] Sein mattes Blut kreiste schneller als sonst durch seine Adern’ (p. 220). He is dismayed at the idea of his pearls ‘auf jener schweißbedeckten, bronzebraunen Haut’ (ibid.), but at

the same time excited by the thought of how much good it would do them to lie ‘auf einem heißen, heißen, wild atmenden, lebensprühenden Frauenkörper’ (ibid.). In the end, he visits the cabaret every evening for a week and spends the nights ‘in einem wüsten Zwiespalt zwischen Abneigung und Leidenschaft’ (ibid.). When Albrecht finally musters up the courage to visit La bella Estrella at her villa, he is thoroughly conquered by the glorious image he beholds there: the fertile Estrella playing wildly with two of her boys on a Smyrna rug. The narrator likens her to a ‘Pantherweibchen mit ihren Jungen’ (p. 224). Overwhelmed, Albrecht manages with some difficulty to request her help with the pearls. She replies with enticing, erotic self-confidence: ‘Ja, ja, das tue ich so gerne. Es ist zu schön, wenn die matten Perlen sich volltrinken an meiner Kraft, wenn sie dann anfangen zu glänzen, wieder Leben zu bekommen’ (p. 225). As Estrella prepares to put the pearl necklace on, a large mirror reflects the racial contrast of the unlikely pair: the prince’s appearance of a ‘hoch gezüchteten, überzüchteten Menschen’ and La bella Estrella, ‘üppig geschmeidig, sprühend von Kraft, strahlend von Leben’ (p. 226). As she lays the pearls onto her neck, Albrecht perceives Estrella’s tangy smell for the first time, a smell like the sea from whence the pearls originated. He takes hold of the exotic woman, who is perfectly ready for an erotic adventure with the rich prince, and yields to his precarious destiny: ‘gleich den sterbenden Perlen sich an den Körper dieser Frau zu schmiegen, mochte sie Heilung bringen oder Vernichtung – – – – ’ (ibid.).

### **An Inbred Fleming: Adrian van Terp of *Chimäre* (1926)**

In the short story, *Chimäre*, the Teutonic inbred makes his final appearance in Madeleine’s work. This time, however, he is not a German but a Flemish nobleman. The Baron Adrian van Terp hails from a town that is ‘so in Stille und Traum eingesponnen, wie man es nur in Flandern findet’.<sup>52</sup> He is ‘hochgewachsen und tannenschlank’ (p. 81) and has ‘ein schmales Gesicht mit glänzend blondem Haar und tiefblauen Augen’ (pp. 81-2). His skin is ‘ein wenig zu blaß’ and the outline of his full lips is ‘ein wenig zu mädchenhaft lieblich’ (p. 82). Indeed, Adrian’s deceased mother, the Baroness van Terp, was ‘blutsverwandt’ with his father (p. 83) and sickness already runs in the family. Adrian’s father died from pulmonary tuberculosis, ‘dem Erbübel der Familie’ at age thirty (ibid.), and his mother died suddenly from an embolism.

<sup>52</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Chimäre* in *Die Töchter des Prometheus*. Berlin: Gebrüder Paetel, 1926, p. 83.

Adrian's mother was the archetypally withdrawn, introverted and impractical Teuton – it is Langbehn's conception of the artistic 'Niederdeutschen' gone slightly awry:

Sie war eine eigenartige Persönlichkeit mit außergewöhnlich stark entwickeltem Innenleben. Ihre Bildung ging weit über das Maß dessen hinaus, was man sonst von einer Frau der Gesellschaft zu erwarten berechtigt ist. Hinwiederum verschob sich das Bild dadurch zu ihrem Ungunsten, daß ihre überwuchernde Phantasie ihre Logik verwirrte, ihrer wissenschaftlichen Einsicht Abbruch tat. (pp. 83-84)

Adrian takes after his mother but is able to concentrate his dreamy nature into writing: 'Was in der Wesenheit seiner Mutter Wildnis war, wurde bei ihm zum Rosengarten' (p. 84). But like Prince Christian and other inbreds, Adrian harbours a peculiar longing for real life. Soon after his mother's death, when he realises that he will need to go out into the world, Adrian thinks: 'Jetzt kommt das Leben! ... Jetzt kommt statt bleicher, opalschimmernder Phantasie blutrote Wirklichkeit!...' (ibid.). Like Christian, he dreams of Paris. His whole being is 'erfüllt von fiebernder Sehnsucht nach den Genüssen, welche die Lichtstadt seinem Geiste und seinen Sinnen spenden würde!...' (pp. 82-83). Once there, he is full of creative energy, though his work receives no attention at first. Nonetheless, as a member of the Montmartre scene, he dazzles the women, who are attracted to his Teutonic politeness, innocence and good looks. His male colleagues, however, mock him as 'der kleine Provinzler' and as a 'Muttersöhnchen' (p. 85).

The Flemish Adrian would seem to correspond neatly to Langbehn's conception of the healthily naïve, provincial artist of 'Low German' background. As Madeleine's work also includes a number of North Germans and Scandinavians who are artistically gifted,<sup>53</sup> we might conclude that she was at least indirectly influenced by Langbehn's conceptions. The nemesis of Langbehn's 'Nether German' is the rational, brutal southerner, exemplified by the French author Emil Zola. Indeed, Adrian ends up used and abused by Paris, the Zolaesque city that Langbehn found thoroughly unfit for an artist: 'In Paris fehlt es dem Künstler an der äußeren und inneren Ruhe, welche die erste Vorbedingung für eine erfreuliche Tätigkeit ist.'<sup>54</sup> It is thus fitting that Adrian's single moment of success in Paris is when he wins a poetry contest, the prize of which is three weeks of obscene luxury in which everything – from a fancy apartment, to interesting acquaintances and a passionate love affair – is arranged in advance. This would seem to be a stereotypically Gallic feat of frivolity. But Madeleine ironises Adrian, the 'Niederdeutsche' to the same degree as his Latin

<sup>53</sup> For instance the Dane Olaf from *Das Stigma* (1908) and the North Germans Felix von Garten of *Die Wegweiserin* (1908) and Konrad von Groningen of *Des Rausches Priesterin* (1916) or Arno Helmstadt of *Maria Fortunata* (1918).

hosts. In his naïve lack of irony, Adrian is incapable of accepting that the three weeks of luxury will end just as quickly as they came about. He returns to Flanders shamed and crippled through a series of ridiculous events resulting from his intemperate romanticism.

### **The Inbred Teuton in the Work of Thomas Mann and Keyserling**

In reading such stories from *Marie Madeleine*, we get an impression of the considerable fascination that the inbred held for *fin-de-siècle* readers. This is also apparent in the anthropological literature around 1900, as several articles from the *Politisch-anthropologische Revue* demonstrate.<sup>55</sup> Of course, the act of incest has always been a popular theme in literature, starting with Greek tragedy and Norse myth. But it was not until the turn of the century that the inbred became a recurrent, literary figure. In particular, there was a fascination with the purported incestuousness and resulting degeneration of the Jews, as Thomas Mann's *Wälsungenblut* or Stratz's pamphlet *Was sind Juden?* (1903) demonstrate. However, the fact that this idea was applied even more frequently to German aristocrats is something that has been neglected by scholarship.

Mann's early work provides us with at least one clear-cut example of the inbred Teutonic nobleman. In *Buddenbrooks*, the schoolboy Hanno's best friend, the young, impoverished Count Kai Mölln, displays all the traits that *Marie Madeleine* would later associate with this type. Kai's head is 'von Natur mit allen Merkmalen einer reinen und edlen Rasse ausgestattet [...]'.<sup>56</sup> He has reddish blond hair and a forehead as white as alabaster under which 'tief und scharf zugleich, hellblaue Augen blitzten' (p. 433). His features are sharp and delicate:

Die Wangenknochen traten ein wenig hervor, und die Nase, mit zarten Nüstern und schmalem, ganz leicht gebogenem Rücken, war, wie der Mund mit etwas geschürzter Oberlippe, schon jetzt von charakteristischem Gepräge. (ibid.)

As Kai grows older, the contrast between his racial purity and neglected appearance becomes more pronounced: 'Der Gegensatz zwischen seiner arg vernachlässigten Toilette und der Rassereinheit [sic] dieses zartknochigen Gesichts mit der ganz leicht gebogenen Nase und der ein wenig geschürzten Oberlippe sprang jetzt noch mehr in die Augen als ehemals' (p. 597). The hooked nose in particular

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<sup>54</sup> Langbehn, *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, p. 95.

<sup>55</sup> See for instance Anon., 'Blutsverwandte Ehen', vol. 1, no. 1, 1902, p. 68; Anon., 'Blutsverwandtschaft und konstitutionelle Krankheiten', vol. 1, no. 6, 1902, p. 490; or Anon., 'Inzucht und Krankheiten auf den Faröer-Inseln', vol. 1, no. 11, 1903, p. 903.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks*, p. 433.



was thought to be a sign of interbreeding – this is how Stratz explained the supposed frequency of hooked noses among Jews and among aristocratic families of all races.<sup>57</sup>

As we have seen, both mixed and over-refined race were thought to engender decadent, artistic personalities. Thus, it is no wonder that Kai and the racially mixed Hanno become the best of friends. Just as Hanno is a talented musician, Kai is a talented storyteller. Both have a worrying tendency towards indolence and fantasy and can spend hours on end amusing one another with their respective art forms. Meanwhile, just as the decadent, mixed blood of the Buddenbrooks has already manifested itself in the foppishness of Hanno's father Thomas, the eccentricities of his uncle Christian and in all of their health problems, the decadent, inbred blood of the Möllns seems to have rendered the family weak, sterile and equally eccentric.

Like Hanno, Kai is an only child and the last of his family line. His father is a strange recluse, his mother died giving birth to him and his only other living relative is an eccentric, artistic aunt, whose calling, like that of Kai, seems to be storytelling. In the following passage, as in the introductory passage from Madeleine's *Prinz Christian*, the influence of Huysmans *À rebours* is unmistakable:

Die einzelnen Zweige der ehemals reichen, mächtigen und stolzen Familie waren nach und nach verdorrt, abgestorben und vermodert, und nur eine Tante des kleinen Kai, mit der sein Vater aber nicht in Korrespondenz stand, war noch am Leben. Sie veröffentlichte unter einem abenteuerlichen Pseudonym Romane in Familienblättern. (p. 433)

The parallels with Mann's next major work, the novella *Tristan*, are also conspicuous. The character Gabriele Klöterjahn, well known as a classic example of the *femme fragile*, may also be an example of the inbred, aristocratic Teuton; the two types could easily go hand in hand in turn-of-the-century, German consciousness. Though not in fact of the nobility, Gabriele is nonetheless from an old, established and decaying family of the Hanseatic bourgeoisie, which in Mann's world takes on all the implications of nobility. Gabriele has the requisite features of the inbred Teuton; she is pale, sickly and fair-haired and strikingly beautiful. A worrying blue vein adorning Gabriele's forehead becomes a recurrent motif in the story, drawing attention to Gabriele's refined, blue-blooded stock. Her mother also seems to have been sickly since she died when Gabriele was just a little girl.

Gabriele is moreover musically inclined, something which runs in her family. Just as her father is a talented violinist, Gabriele is a talented pianist, though her doctor has forbidden her to play. As her admirer, the presumably Jewish aesthete Spinell, remarks: 'es [geschieht] nicht selten [...], daß ein Geschlecht mit

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<sup>57</sup> See Carl Heinrich Stratz, *Was sind Juden? Eine ethnographisch-anthropologische Studie*. Vienna: F. Tempsky / Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1903, p. 24.



praktischen, bürgerlichen und trockenen Traditionen sich gegen das Ende seiner Tage noch einmal durch die Kunst verklärt'.<sup>58</sup> Incest is not specifically mentioned here, but the scenario is close enough to the texts we have examined thus far that inbreeding seems almost implicit.

Eduard von Keyserling's work also includes inbred female characters, whom Keyserling's friend Korfiz Holm has already described as the 'ein wenig müden adeligen Damen mit ihrer ererbten und anerzogenen Verfeinerung'.<sup>59</sup> Exemplary is the character Beate, from *Beate und Mareile*, a pale woman of the Prussian nobility: 'Ihr Gesicht war blaß, von der feinen Blässe der alten Rassen, die von jahrhundertlangem Stehen auf geschützten Höhen müde geworden sind' (p. 39). Her personality is moreover tempered by 'von Schonung und Zucht geschwächten Instinkte[n]'.<sup>60</sup> In Keyserling's next novella, *Harmonie* (1905), Beate finds her equivalent in the similarly retiring character Annemarie, who is summarised as 'der echte, letzte Sproß einer Rasse, die immer davon überzeugt gewesen war, daß für sie die Auslese des Lebens bestimmt sei'.<sup>61</sup>

### The Violent Teuton

If any readers are still inclined to perceive a latent chauvinism in Madeleine's work, they would do well to consider one further conception of the Teuton, offered by one of Madeleine's earliest pieces of writing. Her first play, *Die drei Nächte* (1901), features her most dubious portrayal of the Teuton, which, in typical *fin-de-siècle* fashion, contradicts many of the other racial images she employs. The second act, 'Das Hindumädchen', transports us to turn-of-the-century colonial India, where, needless to say, racial conflict is a pertinent topic. But interestingly, the first racial conflict in 'Das Hindumädchen' is not between the Europeans and the Indians but amongst the Europeans themselves. In the first scene, a Scottish colonel in the British army good-naturedly attempts to discourage his younger colleague, Lieutenant Percy Hammercliff, from getting engaged to his daughter Maud. The colonel feels that his daughter is too cold, just like his Norwegian wife: 'So furchtbar kühl! Wie diese Norwegerinnen es meistens sind! Und so wohlerzogen! [...] Mitunter war das böß für mein Schottenblut'.<sup>62</sup> Thus, before we have even left the colonial mansion, we already have a racial issue: the hot-blooded Celt versus the cold-blooded Teuton. As Madeleine seems to be joking, there are enough racial contradictions amongst the

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Mann, *Sämtliche Erzählungen*, p. 184.

<sup>59</sup> Korfiz Holm, *ich, kleingeschrieben*. Munich: Albert Langen, 1932, p. 198.

<sup>60</sup> Keyserling, *Beate und Mareile in Harmonie. Romane und Erzählungen*. Munich: Knaur, 1998, p. 94.

<sup>61</sup> Eduard von Keyserling, *Harmonie in Harmonie*, p. 117.

<sup>62</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die drei Nächte in Werke*, vol. 1, pp. 333-4.

Europeans themselves; just wait until they are in India. Of course, the British race is comprised of both Teutonic (Anglo-Saxon and Viking) and Celtic elements and Marie Madeleine may be referring to this in the Norwegian-Scottish mix Maud, whose 'Norwegian coolness' actually borders on sadism. At one point, she declares how much she likes to whip her horses:

Mir macht es nun mal Vergnügen: die Leine so ganz straff zwischen zwei  
Finger geklemmt und dann von rechts die Peitsche in die Flanken!  
In die Flanken!  
Das ist besser als übers Kreuz zu schlagen!  
Und wenn dann diese dunklen Pferderücken ganz naß werden und glänzend  
von Schweiß – – (p. 335).

Just as the colonel predicts, Percy begins to suffer under his chaste engagement to Maud, who does not even let him kiss her. Percy's fellow officers also mock him. As Lieutenant Robson prophetically states: 'Die wenigsten Weiber wollen so zart behandelt sein! Und gerade diese kühlen Blondinen mit den Allüren von Königinnen – – –' (p. 337). Percy's peers then go on to malign European culture, claiming that it renders women hysterical and men sexually frustrated. Before wandering off with a few bayaderes, they tease Percy one last time for living like 'ein heiliger Brahmane' (ibid.).

Left alone with his sexual frustration, Percy ends up getting drunk and raping a young Indian girl, who merely wanted to sell him pearls. He unintentionally kills her in the process. What comes to pass afterwards is a brutal satire of colonial society. Nothing happens to Percy – there seem to be no laws against what he has done – and the colonel asks his daughter to forgive his hapless subordinate. Indeed, he attempts to exonerate the young lieutenant with the following explanation: 'Er ist jung und er ist ein Mann. Er hat sich dieses eine einzige Mal von seinen Trieben hinreißen lassen!' (p. 338). He goes on to blame the Indian girl's race for her death: 'Und sie vertragen so wenig, diese Hindukinder! Sie sind von einer sterbenden Rasse, sie sind so wenig widerstandsfähig' (p. 339). Percy, in turn, comes up with another racial explanation for the tragedy: 'Maud, ich weiß ja nicht wie es kam! Vielleicht war es die Sonne, die böse, flammende Tropensonne, die mein nordisches Gehirn versengte!' (ibid.). His excuse seems to play on the turn-of-the-century notion that Nordic races lose much of their purported nobility in hot climates. As Ludwig Wilser warned in 1912:

Aber auch bei völliger Reinhaltung würden unter der Tropensonne nach  
wenigen Geschlechterfolgen Tatkraft, Arbeitslust und Erfindungsgeist  
erschaffen. Ohne ständigen Zufluß frischen, lebenskräftigen Blutes aus der  
alten Heimat muß jede Ansiedlung in heißen Ländern verkommen.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Ludwig Wilser, *Rassen und Völker*. Leipzig: Theodor Thomas, 1912, p. 97.

In the end, Maud forgives Percy. In what is one of Marie Madeleine's more daring conclusions, Maud tells Percy that he has caused her to experience jealousy for the first time. As the guileless Percy is bewildered by this remark, Maud must elaborate that she is jealous of the Indian girl whom he raped. This may seem somewhat extreme – but we might regard it as the culmination of an albeit naïve critique of Northern European repression, which, if we are to accept the play's satirical message, leads to a desire for rape in men and a desire to be raped in women. At the least, 'Das Hindumädchen' offers a curiously modern, ironic twist on colonial notions of race. The colonists, of course, are the true savages. Percy and Maud, the civilised British, seem to be particularly nasty examples of Nietzsche's 'blonde Bestien'. If we consider Nietzsche's famous nervous breakdown upon seeing a horse being whipped, the avid horse-whipper Maud would appear to step well outside the bounds of Nietzsche's conception of the noble barbarian. She stands in stark contrast to the easygoing bayaderes and the timid, delicate 'Hindumädchen', dressed in white 'Kattunfetzen' (p. 838). Indians may be sensual, as the bayaderes would seem to demonstrate, but they are gently, openly, healthily so. They are also more capable than Northern Europeans of keeping their sensuality under control; being a 'heiliger Brahmane' is obviously something better left to delicate Indian men than to hearty British colonists.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: THE AESTHETICS OF THE SLAVIC RACE**

The principal manifestation of the Slav in Marie Madeleine's work is a cruel and beautiful Russian woman, a *femme fatale*. This figure, which appears over ten times in her writing – in most of her short story collections, two of her plays and one novella – is one of the primary agents behind the libertine and brutal sensuality that characterises Madeleine's scenarios. For the mere reason that Madeleine's Latin and Teutonic figures never display the frankness and cruel capriciousness of her Russian *femme fatale*, it is clear that the Slavic racial element is of particular centrality to the latter's characterisation.

In the first chapter, we addressed the issue of Madeleine's own identification with the Slavic world and considered the possibility that the Russian *femme fatale* was a sort of fantasy alter ego. It seems that Madeleine may have regarded Slaviness as an ornamentation for herself, a dandy's outfit, much in the same way that Friedrich Nietzsche displayed his supposed Polishness, as we will explore in this chapter. The extent to which the young Marie Madeleine may have felt Slavic is testified by a seemingly autobiographical poem, 'Die Geschwister', in her second collection of poetry, *An der Liebe Narrenseil* (1902). Here a young woman of Slavic extraction addresses her tormented younger brother, who is on the threshold of adolescence, just as Madeleine herself may have addressed her own younger brother, himself an adolescent at the time. Convinced that he is in for the same fate as she herself, the narrator tells him:

Bist aus demselben kranken Blut wie ich!  
Wir haben beide märchendurst'ge Seelen; --  
Hast auch die slavisch wilde Glut für Dich,  
Und wirst wie ich Dich sehnen und Dich quälen!<sup>1</sup>

The narrator concludes: 'Wir tragen beide auf der schmalen Stirn / Das Zeichen derer, die um Liebe leiden' (ibid.). Thus, the young Madeleine presents the Slavs as a people marked apart by tormented desire, by an insatiable longing for fantastical and sensual experiences. In keeping with turn-of-the-century consciousness, these tendencies are considered racially based and degenerate – the Slavic siblings are of the same 'kranken Blut'.

Of course, as an aspiring decadent dandy, Madeleine revelled in such appellations. That she considered carnal longing as well as bodily and nervous illness

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<sup>1</sup> Marie Madeleine, *An der Liebe Narrenseil*, p. 69.

to be romantic is already apparent in the aforementioned novella *Die indische Felsentaube* with the sympathetic young French-Russian Olga Flammberg. Indeed, Russian or French racial admixture could have held equal appeal for a romantic, young decadent like Marie Madeleine. France initiated the European decadent movement, Paris was the capital of the artistic and erotic world and Russia was a vast, mysterious land with a powerful literary tradition that was in vogue in Germany at the time. But for reasons that we will now attempt to unravel, Madeleine chose the Slavic world – and more specifically, the Russian woman – as the ultimate emblem of decadent fantasy and eroticism. As mentioned earlier, Madeleine's childhood in the frontier community of Eydtkuhnen probably exposed her to the spectacle of the wealthy and luxurious Russian aristocracy, on their way to and from Paris. Yet, like her portrayal of the Teuton, Madeleine's portrayal of the Russian *femme fatale* and of other Slavic characters also owes a great deal to earlier literary and racial theoretical conceptions.

There is a tendency nowadays to dismiss the German perception of the Slav as something unilaterally negative, not to mention irrelevant and uninteresting in the face of German anti-Semitism. Such a conclusion may be accurate in regards to supporters of the Third Reich as well as to the more chauvinist Germans of earlier generations. In German literature, we can trace the disdain for the Slav as far back as 1855, with the publication of Gustav Freytag's best-selling *Soll und Haben*. Here it seems that the Jews, with their ruthless intelligence, pose the greatest threat to German society, while Slavic indolence and dishonesty merely cause a great many annoyances. As a sympathetic character in *Soll und Haben* famously states:

Es giebt keine Race, welche so wenig das Zeug hat, vorwärts zu kommen und sich durch ihre Capitalien Menschlichkeit und Bildung zu erwerben, als die slavische. Was die Leute dort im Müßiggang durch den Druck der stupiden Masse zusammengebracht haben, vergeuden sie in phantastischen Spielereien.<sup>2</sup>

Such curt dismissals of the Slavs are likely to be familiar to the reader. What has been more or less forgotten is the peculiar fascination and even ambivalent romance regarding the Slavic world, which ultimately resounds in Freytag's work as well, even in the aforementioned passage, as the mysterious comment regarding 'phantastisch[e] Spielereien' indicates.

Nowhere is this fascination more apparent than in the race-obsessed literary decadence of the turn of the century, in which Slavs feature as some of the most

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<sup>2</sup> Gustav Freytag, *Soll und Haben*, vol. 1. Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1874, p. 376.

interesting and unequivocally decadent characters. Like other non-Teutonic races, the Slavs are associated here with sensuality, impracticality and fantasy. But there is also a strong element of darkness – of mystery, brutality, oblivion and extremes – which seems to have been considered especially Slavic. This stands in stark contrast to the joyful, insouciant sensuality, which, as is well known, has characterised the German conception of the Mediterranean peoples since at least the end of the eighteenth century. In conjunction with ominous bursts of otherworldly beauty and superhuman psychological insight – which, extraordinarily, were also thought to characterise the Slavic race – this mystical darkness would seem to render Slavs particularly suited to such typically decadent roles as *femme fatale*, narcissistic romantic or depraved aesthete.

### **The German Racial Conception of the Slav at the Turn of the Century**

In Madeleine's day, the Slavic world embraced a vast territory to the East of Germany and also constituted a considerable population within Germany's own borders. Yet, while countless Germans lived side-by-side with Poles, Kashubians, Sorbs and other northern Slavic peoples, their knowledge of Slavic languages and Slavic culture tended to lag behind that of historically more important Romance culture and language. While educated Germans of the turn of the century were quite familiar with Roman history, Italian art and French literature, the Slavic world remained an enigma.

Like the early Germans, the early Slavs were amongst the so-called barbarian peoples of late antiquity. In the eyes of Enlightenment historians, both peoples owed their cultural development to the classical world, whose demise they supposedly contributed to. But as Germans grew more nationally conscious – starting with the Napoleonic occupation in particular – many challenged the negativity inherent to the concept of the Teutonic barbarian and, drawing on the Roman historian Tacitus's *Germania*, argued that the early Germans were noble savages predestined to unprecedented greatness. As the nineteenth century progressed, however, racial theory provided the basis for a more immoderate argument. As we have seen, some German scholars began to insist that the greatness of ancient Greece and Rome was actually due to Aryan and hence Teutonic founding fathers, the Mediterranean world having since fallen into a state of racial chaos and cultural decay. But rather than



embracing the Slavs as fellow Aryan barbarians, many such scholars made even shorter work of their eastern neighbours. While chauvinist Germans had less of a cultural inferiority complex regarding the Slavic world, they had, after centuries of competition for territory, just as much historical rancour towards the Slavic peoples as towards the Latin peoples. Hence, the new racial historians of Germany preferred to conceive of the Slavs as a formerly Aryan people that had intermixed early on with Tartar and Mongolian conquerors, thus becoming greatly inferior to the more purely Aryan Germans. This is how the notion of slanted Slavic eyes, addressed in the previous chapter, came into being.

Theories, however, varied as to whether this Mongolian admixture rendered the Slavs passive and harmless or aggressive and threatening to German interests. Theodor Poesche, for instance, portrays the Slavs as a degenerate and effeminate race, with a large population and considerable territory but posing little threat to German domination – something which the German control of the western Poles and the Austrian control of the Czechs seemed to confirm. In Poesche's conception, the Germans, as the purer Aryans, are by nature aggressive, enterprising and heroic – Nietzsche's 'blonde Bestien' conquering in dynamic *Männerbünden* – while the indolent Slavs simply spread out gradually in almost plant-like growth.<sup>3</sup>

Other scholars, drawing attention to the violent, Mongolian invasions of the Middle Ages, were convinced of the contrary. Heinrich Driesmans, for instance, regarded the Slavs as full of animal energy on account of their supposedly Mongolian blood:

Die slawische Rasse muss bereits in vorgeschichtlicher Zeit mongolisches Blut in starkem Masse in sich aufgenommen haben. Die wiederholten Mongolenstürme während des Mittelalters und die Tartarenherrschaft, der Russland von 1225—1480 unterstand, haben dieser Rasse den zugleich zähen und impulsiven – um nicht zu sagen explosiven – Charakter verliehen, durch den sie sich so auffällig von ihren arischen Stammesgenossen unterscheidet. Insbesondere hat sie aus dem mongolischen Element die animalische Energie gewonnen, an welcher die arische hinter der mongolischen Rasse weit zurücksteht, jene Energie, vermöge deren die Mongolen alle asiatischen Staaten von China bis Indien, Persien, Arabien und Byzantinen erschüttert und mit ihrem Element durchdrungen haben.<sup>4</sup>

Drawing on more recent history, Driesmans' contemporary Eberhard Kraus went so far as to portray the revolutionary tendencies in Russia as part of an ongoing

<sup>3</sup> See Poesche, *Die Arier*, pp. 124-32.

<sup>4</sup> Heinrich Driesmans, *Rasse und Milieu*, Berlin: Johannes Rade, 1902, pp. 158-9.

‘Rassenkampf’, in which the hot-blooded Mongolian elements in the Russian people rise up against a prudent, more Aryan aristocracy:

Der Anthropologe [...] wird in der zügellosen Art, mit der die russische Jugend sich größere Rechte und Freiheiten zu erkämpfen sucht, die volle Wildheit wiedererkennen, mit der der dunkler gefärbte, heißblütige Mensch schon oft die Fesseln gebrochen hat, in die der hellhäutige und besonnene ihn einst geschlagen.<sup>5</sup>

But even though most German scholars of the turn of the century agreed that there was something Asiatic about the Slavs, not all of them regarded this as inherently negative. Many were well aware of the historical intermixing between Germans and Slavs and thus suspected, with good reason, that they had Slavic background themselves. We have observed that there was considerable enthusiasm for racial mixture at the turn of the century and that certain scholars, such as Müller or Treitschke, felt Slavic blood played an integral role in Prussian Germany’s political and military success. Of all such enthusiasts for mixed race, it was perhaps Nietzsche who was the most positive regarding the Slavs. As Gerd Schank points out, Nietzsche frequently romanticised the Poles and his own purportedly Polish blood,<sup>6</sup> and as Gregory Moore illustrates in some detail, the Russians represented for Nietzsche a powerful, potentially regenerating force for all of Europe.<sup>7</sup> At one point, in a passage that remained unpublished during his lifetime, Nietzsche even championed the Slavs as a race:

Die Polen galten mir als die begabtesten und ritterlichsten unter den slavischen Völkern; und die Begabung der Slaven schien mir höher als die der Deutschen, ja ich meinte wohl, die Deutschen seien erst durch eine starke Mischung mit slavischem Blute in die Reihe der begabtesten Nationen eingerückt.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, for Nietzsche, Slaviness was a sort of romantic decoration, an emblem for his status as an outsider and misunderstood genius.

Meanwhile, Nietzsche’s contemporary Friedrich Müller went to the extent of praising not only Slavic blood but also the Mongolian elements behind it, which supposedly play a role in the success of the Hungarians and Russians:

Einer Vermischung des zur mongolischen Rasse gehörenden Stammes der Ungarn mit Slaven und Germanen verdankt das kräftige und ritterliche Volk

<sup>5</sup> Eberhard Kraus, ‘Rassenkämpfe in Rußland’, pp. 272-83 in *Politische-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1902, p. 273.

<sup>6</sup> See Gerd Schank, *‘Rasse’ und ‘Züchtung’ bei Nietzsche*. Berlin / New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000, pp. 108-9.

<sup>7</sup> See Gregory Moore, ‘From Buddhism to Bolshevism: Some Orientalist Themes in German Thought’, pp. 20-42 in *German Life and Letters*, vol. 56, no. 1, January 2003, pp. 32-3.

<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche, ‘Studien aller Art zu “die fröhliche Wissenschaft”’ in *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, V/II, Berlin / New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973, p. 580.

der Magyaren seinen Ursprung. Die Russen, das mächtigste Slavenvolk der Neuzeit, sind einer Mischung der Slaven und Germanen mit mehreren Völkern der mongolischen Rasse entsprossen.<sup>9</sup>

Stratz also dabbled in such sentiments regarding the Russians. In the introduction to his *Rassenschönheit*, he contemplates that Mongolian-Caucasian interbreeding in Russia might lead to a new, master race: 'Im russischen Reich vollzieht sich in grossem Massstabe eine langsame Amalgamirung von Mittelländern und Mongolen, und – vielleicht entwickeln sich aus diesem chemischen Process die zukünftigen Herrscher der Welt.'<sup>10</sup> Indeed, as Ritchie Robertson points out, speculation and fear regarding a future Slavic domination of Europe had already characterised German culture for decades.<sup>11</sup>

Russia, as the largest and most powerful Slavic land, played a particularly marked role in the turn-of-the-century Germans' fear and fascination regarding the Slav. Beyond German Prussia's unstable Polish territory, this ominous Slavic giant seemed increasingly volatile – inwardly, with aggressive revolutionaries, as well as outwardly, with aggressive expansionism towards the East in particular. Russia presented an unclear, mysterious danger, just as all things about the Slavic world were unclear and mysterious. This feeling is well expressed by an article from *Der Welt Spiegel* of 1901:

Rußland, die große Sphinx, die der Menschheit jetzt wieder so viele Rätsel aufgibt, indem sie mit dem Weltfrieden liebäugelt und sich zugleich mit unheimlichem Heißhunger nach dem asiatischen Osten weiterfrißt, Rußland bietet auch in seinem Innern eine Fülle seltsamster Probleme. So steht dem schwelgerischen und überfeinerten Glanz der Großen eine unerhörte Armuth, ein kaum beschreiblicher Tiefstand der Kultur in der niederen Bevölkerung entgegen.<sup>12</sup>

This idea of Russia as an uncanny, sphinx-like realm of conundrums, obscene decadence and barbaric extremes frequently manifests itself in the personas of the Russian characters that appear in German literature at the turn of the century.

With the rise of train travel, foreign study and foreign vacationing among Europe's elite in the nineteenth century, Germans also came into increasing contact with Russians in their own country. Young Russians flocked to German universities to study and many of them, fleeing the most backward and reactionary country in

<sup>9</sup> Friedrich Müller, *Allgemeine Ethnologie*. Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1879, p. 61.

<sup>10</sup> Stratz, *Die Rassenschönheit des Weibes*, p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> See Ritchie Robertson, 'Zum deutschen Slawenbild von Herder bis Musil', pp. 116-44 in Urs Faes and Béatrice Ziegler eds., *Das eigene und das Fremde. Festschrift für Urs Bitterli*. Zurich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2000, p. 118.

<sup>12</sup> F.E., 'Das hungernde Russland' in *Der Welt Spiegel*, 25 April 1901.

Europe, exhibited radical political tendencies that only enhanced the German image of Russia and the Slavic race as full of extremes and eccentricities. Through their familiarity with such authors as Dostoevsky or Turgenev, educated Germans and other Europeans were also well aware that extremist tendencies, from nihilism to socialism to orthodox fervour, had been under way in Russian culture for decades. Though this is no moral justification for racial theory, it may in part explain why Paul Bourget, as indicated in chapter three, felt that nihilism was inherent to the Slavic soul, or why Julius Langbehn took the liberty of calling nihilism 'jene slawische oder orientalische Erbkrankheit'.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Russian students for their part tended to regard their German peers as too submissive and conformist,<sup>14</sup> an opinion which is reflected in the peculiarly ironic and even condescending manner with which Slavs habitually deal with Germans in turn-of-the-century German literature.

### France and Russia

The francophile Marie Madeleine is also likely to have been influenced by more lighthearted French conceptions of the Slavs, and of the Russians in particular. At the turn of the century, the Russian nobility was infatuated with French culture. While Russians were frequently seen at German universities and also German thermal stations, they were positively rampant in Paris and on the Riviera (where Germans such as Marie Madeleine also came into contact with them), often living out a greater portion of their lives there. We might recall Thomas Mann's Russian *femme fatale* Clawdia Chauchat from *Der Zauberberg*, who speaks French like a native and even employs a French surname. The same phenomenon was apparent to a lesser extent amongst members of the Polish aristocracy, whom German writers have traditionally portrayed as ridiculously Frenchified, constantly pronouncing 'leichte französische Bonmots', as in Freytag's *Soll und Haben*.<sup>15</sup>

Though there was no reciprocal French desire to live in Russia, there was a feeling of mutual warmth and curiosity between the two peoples, which had a strong political background with Germany as a common enemy. As Jacques Dugast confirms: 'Les accords politiques conclus à partir de 1891, qui ont conduit à l'Alliance franco-russe signée en 1894, ont suscité dans une large partie de l'opinion

<sup>13</sup> Langbehn, *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, p. 121.

<sup>14</sup> See Jacques Dugast, *La vie culturelle en Europe au tournant des xix<sup>e</sup> et xx<sup>e</sup> siècles*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2001, p. 68.

<sup>15</sup> Freytag, *Soll und Haben*, vol. 2, p. 67.

française un véritable engouement pour la Russie'.<sup>16</sup> Dugast draws attention to the Parisian 'fêtes franco-russes' of 1893, the popular success of Czar Nicholas II in Paris in 1896 and the interest awakened by the Russian pavilion at the 'Exposition universelle' in 1900 (p. 67). If *Die Woche* is any evidence, there was also something of a Berlin fashion for Russian culture around 1905,<sup>17</sup> but it never reached the same proportions.

This is the cultural milieu that spawned the French motif of the *belle russe*, of which the German Marie Madeleine can be regarded as the most avid proponent. With exotic Russian ladies of the upper classes increasingly a feature of the Riviera landscape, a French affinity for the cool beauty of the Russian woman came into being in the late nineteenth century. Guy de Maupassant gives voice to this phenomenon in his short story 'En voyage' (1883), in which a French doctor recounts the stereotypically eccentric and sadomasochistic flirtation between two Russians on the Riviera. As the doctor remarks:

Vous savez comme les Russes sont belles, du moins comme elles nous semblent belles, avec leur nez fin, leur bouche délicate, leurs yeux rapprochés, d'une indéfinissable couleur, d'un bleu gris, et leur grâce froide, un peu dure! Elles ont quelque chose de méchant et de séduisant, d'altier et de doux, de tendre et de sévère, tout à fait charmant pour un Français.<sup>18</sup>

This is a veritable model for the Russian women in the work of Madeleine and many of her contemporaries, right down to the indistinct blue-gray eye-colour, which will also play a role in the work of Thomas Mann. We might compare it, for instance, to Madeleine's portrayal of the title figure in her early poem 'La princesse russe' (1903): 'In ihrem slavisch blassen Gesicht / Zwei graue Augen, - schläfrig und kühl, - [...] um ihre blassen Lippen ruht / Ein Zug von Kälte, von Hochmuthsgefühl'.<sup>19</sup> It is probable that Marie Madeleine – who translated Maupassant's *Au Soleil* (1891), and whose brand of curt and ironic short story bears the unmistakable mark of Maupassant's influence – was familiar with the aforementioned passage from *En voyage*. But the young Madeleine was also likely to have been familiar with other French works in which the 'belle russe' appears, such as the decadent writer Jean

<sup>16</sup> See DuGast, *La vie culturelle en Europe...*, p. 66.

<sup>17</sup> See such articles as: Olga Wohlbrück, 'Russische Aristokratinnen', vol. 7, no. 3, 21 January 1905, pp. 115-9; A. von Aurich, 'Russische Apothekerinnen' vol. 7, no. 7, 18 February 1905, pp. 297-300; Olga Wohlbrück, 'Russische Ostern', vol. 7, no. 16, 22 April 1905, pp. 682-5; August Scherl, 'Russisches Landleben', vol. 7, no. 24, 17 June 1905, pp. 1035-9; or Olga Wohlbrück, 'Russische Mädchenerziehung', vol. 8, no. 3, 20 January 1906, pp. 129-130.

<sup>18</sup> Guy de Maupassant, *En Voyage* in *Miss Harriet*. Paris, Gallimard, 1978, p. 238.



Lorrain's novel *Très Russe* (1886). Indeed, we might regard Marie Madeleine's preoccupation with Russian *femmes fatales* as just as much a part of her francophilia as of her slavophilia – something which would be confirmed by the fact that we tend to encounter them as they sojourn on the Riviera, just like Maupassant's Russians.

It is true that during this time, many Russian noblewomen of particular beauty and intelligence sojourned in France, among them the Countess Potocka, Marie Kann, and, in particular, the young and enchanting painter Marie Bashkirtseff, whose French diary, published posthumously in 1887, enjoyed immense popularity throughout Europe. Madeleine is likely to have read at least parts of it. Though, like Madeleine, Bashkirtseff was not explicitly a feminist, she cherished art and knowledge before all else and became a sort of emblem for woman's struggle against the confines of marriage and family. As the Bashkirtseff scholars Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollack confirm:

Never before had a woman so coolly analysed her emotions and questioned woman's guiding purpose – love. Never before had a woman so openly revolted against all that woman was meant to be – where she should have been self-sacrificing, she was egotistical; where she should have longed for home and hearth, she desired knowledge and education; where she should have patiently waited for marriage, she equivocated about that option; where she should have been content to live as some man's wife, she longed to be famous herself.<sup>20</sup>

It is possible that Madeleine's frequent portrayal of seductive and dangerously intelligent Russians has its roots in a childhood infatuation with Bashkirtseff. As we will observe, such figures as Sascha Betzkaroff of *Das bißchen Liebe*, become, like Marie Bashkirtseff, emblems of woman's true nature, liberated by wealth and Slavic frankness.

Madeleine may have also been familiar with Laura Marholm, whose anti-feminist study *Das Buch der Frauen* (1895), offers a condescending, sometimes scathing look at the lives of six free-spirited female figureheads of the late nineteenth century, including Marie Bashkirtseff and another Russian, the writer Sonja Kowalewska. Marholm's 'zeitpsychologische Porträts' are tinged with fashionable racial psychology, particularly when it comes to the two Slavic artists. For instance, regarding Bashkirtseff's childhood, Marholm writes that 'ihre ganze Umgebung [...]

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<sup>19</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Im Spielerparadies. Momentphotographien aus Monte Carlo*. Berlin: Eysler, 1903, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Rozsicka Parker and Griselda Pollack, 'Introduction' in Marie Bashkirtseff, *Journal*. London: Virago Press, 1905, p. vii.



lebte in echt russischer vegetativer Indolenz',<sup>21</sup> while Bashkirtseff's precocious intuition is apparently 'selbst für das reiche russische Temperament ohnegleichen' (p. 20). Regarding Kowalewska, Marholm's racial conceptions of Slavs, equally applicable to Bashkirtseff, continue to gain momentum. At this point, all the stereotypes of Slavic passion, intuition and nihilism come into play:

Sie war eine Natur von Stahl und Feuer, wie sie unter den slavischen Frauen häufiger ist, als in irgend einer anderen europäischen Rasse, und sie hatte jenes seltsame, ahnungsvolle, stachelnde Gefühl von der Kürze des Lebens, das auch Marie Baschkirtseff in wenigen kurzen Jahren zu Leistungen trieb, die bei anderen Rassen ein Menschenalter erfordern. Sonja Kowalewskas Erwachen zur Jungfrau fiel außerdem in jene Fieberjahre der russischen Jugend, in denen die Nihilisten-Attentate Zeugnis gaben von dem Arbeiten eines unterirdischen Vulkans, wo Herzen und Geister der jungen enthusiastischen russischen Intelligenz weißgeglüht wurden zu den selbstvernichtenden Thaten des Fanatismus. (p. 144)

Marholm later makes reference to the 'Beweglichkeit und dem Feuer der russischen Phantasie' (pp. 149-50) as well as the 'anfang- und uferlosen Sehnsucht der russischen Natur' (p. 183). If the adolescent Madeleine were familiar with both Bashkirtseff's diary and Marholm's interpretations, she would have needed little else to inspire her portrayal of the free-spirited and chimerical Russian *femme fatale*.

### **The Romance of the Slav in Nineteenth-Century German Literature**

The German literary tradition of the nineteenth century likewise offered a host of images of Slavs, which are bound to have left their mark on Marie Madeleine's writing. The French idea of the mysterious 'belle russe', for instance, is also present in the German literary tradition in the form of the 'schöne Polin', who may have also provided some of the basis for Madeleine's Russian *femmes fatales*. Indeed, notions that were once applied to individual peoples, such as Poles and Russians or French and Italians, fed into later, overall notions of the Slavic or Latin races. In particular, we observe a curious German tradition of portraying the Poles as beautiful, pagan and sensual on the one hand and the Russians as fabulously indolent, luxurious and cruel on the other hand. By 1900, these traditions had amalgamated into a single, dubious image of the Slavic race as a whole.

Regarding the 'schöne Polin', Ritchie Robertson has already listed some of the prime examples of this figure in German literature, likening her to the more well

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<sup>21</sup> Laura Marholm, *Das Buch der Frauen*. Paris / Leipzig: Albert Langen, 1895, p. 8.

known 'schöne Jüdin' or 'belle juive'.<sup>22</sup> Yet the 'schöne Polin' is a unique literary type, clearly distinct from Jewish or Mediterranean women in German literature. As equivalent portrayals of Polish men demonstrate, the motif of the 'schöne Jüdin' is based more on specific racial-typological conceptions than on general notions of gender and alterity. In E.T.A. Hoffmann's 'Nachtstück' *Das Gelübde* (1817), for instance, many ideas that would later be applied to the Slavs as a race are already present in Hoffmann's portrayal of the Poles. With their psychologically intense nature and their tormented, cruel dealings with one another, the Polish characters are particularly well suited to Hoffmann's topos of the dark, mystical side of human existence. The narrator's portrait of the moody Polish woman could be applied to any number of Slavic characters that appear in turn-century-of-the-century German literature:

Man sagt den polnischen Frauen nach, daß ein eignes launisches Wesen sie auszeichne. Tiefes Gefühl, sich hingebender Leichtsinn, stoische Selbstverleugnung, glühende Leidenschaft, todstarre Kälte, alles das, wie es bunt gemischt in ihrem Gemüte liegt, erzeugt das wunderliche unstete Treiben auf der Oberfläche, das dem *Spiel* gleicht der in stetem Wechsel fortplätschernden Wellen des im tiefsten Grunde bewegten Bachs.<sup>23</sup>

Hermenegilda, the *schöne Polin* at the centre of the story, is also dangerously, even supernaturally beautiful, something that would mark the portrayal of many Polish and Slavic characters for more than a century to come. In his essay 'Über Polen' (1823), Heinrich Heine went so far as to characterise the entire Polish aristocracy as something amazingly picturesque, anticipating the turn-of-the-century trend of race as *objet d'art*:

Und wahrlich, ich sollte denken, wenn man einen kräftigen, echten polnischen Edelmann, oder eine schöne edle Polin in ihrem wahren Glanze sieht, so könnte dieses die Seele eben so erfreuen, wie etwa der Anblick einer romantischen Felsenburg, oder einer marmornen Medizäerin.<sup>24</sup>

In particular, Heine's Polish woman becomes a 'Weichsel-Aphrodite' (p. 296), evoking the pagan imagery that would later characterise the Slav. Two years earlier, in Johanna Schopenhauer's novel *Gabriele* (1821), there is likewise mention of the 'verwünscht hübschen Polinnen'<sup>25</sup> as well as their peculiar gracefulness: 'Freilich schweben diese Sarmatin wie Grazien einher...' (ibid.). In Schopenhauer's

<sup>22</sup> See Robertson, 'Zum deutschen Slawenbild von Herder bis Musil', p. 128.

<sup>23</sup> E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Das Gelübde in Nachtstücke*. Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1982, p. 296.

<sup>24</sup> Heinrich Heine, 'Über Polen' in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 5. Leipzig: Insel, 1914, p. 290.

<sup>25</sup> Johanna Schopenhauer, *Gabriele. Ein Roman*, vol. 1, Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1821, p. 270.

conception, Polish women display an 'eigenthümliche Anmuth der Formen und der Bewegung'.<sup>26</sup>

Surprisingly, such images also characterise Gustav Freytag's portrayal of the Poles, of Polish men in particular. Though Freytag famously conceived of the Polish peasants as a villainous and untalented mass and the Polish aristocracy as corrupt and decadent, his Polish officers and nobleman nonetheless come across as courageous, clever and beautiful, albeit in an extravagant and oblivious way that seems quite ominous to Germans. One of the more fascinating scenes in *Soll und Haben* is an aristocratic Polish reception, to which the bourgeois German protagonist, Anton Wohlfahrt, has been invited. Paralleling Schopenhauer, the Poles are contrasted here to the Germans as 'ein beweglicheres Volk, elastischer, schwunghafter, leichter ergriffen'.<sup>27</sup> As the intoxication of the Slavic celebration progresses, a stereotypically off-kilter and androgynous atmosphere arises. To compensate for the dearth of women, for instance, an archetypally beautiful Polish count pretends to be a woman:

Da der Damen zu wenig waren, band ein junger Graf mit einem schwarzen Sammtbärtchen und zwei wunderschönen blauen Augen sein Battisttuch um den Arm und erklärte sich mit einem graziösen Knix für eine Dame. Sogleich wurde er von einem anderen Herrn ritterlich zum Tanz geführt.<sup>28</sup>

Germans, on the other hand, are not capable of such refined excitement and androgyny. Though a woman of great beauty, the German aristocrat Lenore simply looks ridiculous when she tries to participate in the revelry: 'Was den polnischen Mädchen natürlich stand, die schnellen Bewegungen, die starke Erregung, das machte Lenore wild und [...] unweiblich'.<sup>29</sup> Throughout the rest of the novel, Polish men are characterised as excessively beautiful, elegant and mischievous and not much else. Freytag mentions, for instance, 'de[n] edle[n] Schnitt des polnischen Herrenantlitzes'<sup>30</sup> and in describing a troop of Polish insurgents, the German nobleman Fink makes the peculiar remark that there are 'hübsche Jungen darunter'.<sup>31</sup>

The beautiful and bizarre Slav later becomes a central motif in the work of Theodor Fontane, one of the major stylistic and thematic influences on German authors of the early twentieth century such as Madeleine, Thomas Mann and Eduard von Keyserling. Fontane's benignly chauvinistic conception of the Slavic race is

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<sup>26</sup> Johanna Schopenhauer, *Nachlaß*, vol. 1. Braunschweig: Verlag von George Westermann, 1839, p. 67.

<sup>27</sup> Gustav Freytag, *Soll und Haben*, vol. 2, p. 67.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 232

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 232.

evident as early as 1873, in the third volume of his *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*. In one chapter, Fontane makes an effort to portray the pre-Christian Wends in a relatively positive light, challenging traditional notions of the Slavs as deceitful. Ultimately, however, Fontane emphasises the superiority of the Teutons, which he claims is racially based:

Die Wenden waren [...] um kein Haar falscher und untreuer als ihre Besieger, die Deutschen; aber in einem waren sie ihnen allerdings unebenbürtig, in jener gestaltenden, große Ziele von Generation zu Generation unerschütterlich im Auge behaltenden Kraft, die zu allen Zeiten der Grundzug der germanischen Rasse gewesen und noch jetzt die Bürgerschaft ihres Lebens ist.<sup>32</sup>

Fontane then compares the Medieval Wends with the modern Poles and, in his description of the Polish national character, lays out a romantic and slanted conception of the Slavic race, which he will employ in later works of fiction, particularly *Cécile* (1886) and *Effi Briest* (1895).<sup>33</sup> While Germans are strong and resolute, Slavs, though by all means a seductive and passionate people, are thoroughly impractical. As Fontane elucidates:

Immer voll Neigung, ihre Kräfte nach außen hin schweifen zu lassen, statt sie im Zentrum zu einen, fehlte ihnen das Konzentrische, während sie exzentrisch waren in jedem Sinne. Dazu die individuelle Freiheit höher achtend als die staatliche Festigung – wer erkannte in diesem allen nicht polnisch-nationale Züge? (p. 25).

Fontane's conception of the 'eccentric' Slav was therefore not far from Gustav Freytag's conception, in which the Slavs waste what they have achieved in 'phantastischen Spielereien'. The significant difference is that Fontane regarded the Slavs as a nonetheless uncannily attractive people, as 'ausgerüstet mit lebenswürdigen und blendenden Eigenschaften' (p. 24), not least because of their purported eccentricity and impracticality.

Such a conception of the Slavs may come as a surprise to modern readers, but it was not the most peculiar of the German ideas regarding the Slavic psyche under way by the middle of the nineteenth century. The torment and perverse machinations characterising the relationships between Hoffmann's Poles in *Das Gelübde* already hint at the cruelty, towards both others and oneself, which was also thought to characterise the Slav. This idea was applied to the Russians in particular, who Bogumil Goltz, writing in 1859, felt were characterised not only by an 'Indolenz

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<sup>32</sup> Theodor Fontane, *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg* in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 9. Munich, Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1960, p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> See my article 'Fontane's Aesthetics of the Slavic Race' in *German Life and Letters*, vol. 56, no. 3, July 2003, pp. 213-22.

und Formlosigkeit des Charakters' but also by a 'Grausamkeit, welche ohne Leidenschaft ausgeübt wird'.<sup>34</sup> In the decades that followed, Slavs would be increasingly associated with what we now designate as sadomasochism – indeed, it is from the name of the Galician writer Leopold von Sacher-Masoch that the latter part of the word originates, first coined by Richard von Krafft-Ebing in his study *Psychopathia sexualis* (1886). Sacher-Masoch's work is full of Slavic men and women in sadomasochistic relationships and exhibits a peculiar fixation with cruel, Slavic beauties. For instance, Sacher-Masoch's notorious *Venus im Pelz* (1869), still a cult hit in the English-speaking world, presents two Slavic lovers acting out their perverse fantasies during a vacation in Italy, while *Ein weiblicher Sultan* (1873) portrays the Czarina Elisabeth as a violent, selfish (and nonetheless winsome) dominatrix and her entire Moscow court as a gala of psychologically intense sexual manipulation.

By the turn of the century, there was a general feeling that sadomasochism was somehow deeply rooted in Slavic culture. Aside from the testimony of Sacher-Masoch, Russian cultural history – particularly the brutal phenomenon of Russian serfdom – helped Germans along to this problematic conclusion. By 1909, Felix Asnaurow went so far as to publish a brief study, 'Passivität und Masochismus in der Kulturgeschichte Rußlands', in which he traced Russian masochism back to the Middle Ages when, in a state of chaos, the Russians allowed themselves to be ruled by Scandinavian chieftains, only to fall increasingly under the hegemony of brutal Mongolian warlords. As a result, reasons Asnaurow, the Russian princes themselves became every bit as brutal towards their own people.<sup>35</sup> This, apparently, is the origin of the 'sozialen Agonie' (ibid.) of Russian serfdom, which turned into a 'Greuel sadistisch-masochistischer Orgien, wie sie in keiner anderen Geschichte zu finden ist' (p. 804). Despite the abolition of serfdom, claims Asnaurow, all aspects of Russian life and culture exhibit sadomasochism, from the schools and military, to Russian women – who apparently only feel loved by men who beat them up – to Russian literature. Regarding Dostoevsky, Asnaurow writes: 'Fast ein jedes seiner Werke ist ein Studium nach der Natur des Masochismus in der russischen Volksseele' (p. 806). Ultimately, Asnaurow is able to implicate the Slavic race as a whole by including Sacher-Masoch in his argument: 'In Dostojewsky – Tolstoy – Sacher-Masoch

<sup>34</sup> Bogumil Goltz, *Zur Charakteristik und Naturgeschichte der Frauen*. Berlin: Otto Janke, 1904, p. 124.

vereinigt sich die slawische Volksseele zu einem tiefen Moll-Akkord menschlicher Tragödie' (p. 807).

### **Russian Femmes Fatales: *Arme Ritter* (1904)**

Such images of intensity, mystery and tragedy – the 'minor chord' of the Slavic soul – obviously fascinated decadent writers like Marie Madeleine immensely. Around the same time as Asnaurow's article, Albert Friedenthal conjured up a particularly sumptuous portrait of the luxurious Russian woman and her bizarre habits, which, like a pasage from Huysmans's *À rebours*, is as shadowy and perverse as it is enchanting, thus shedding further light on the appeal the Russian woman must have held for the young Marie Madeleine:

In ihrem Wesen ist die Russin langsam, schlendernd, zur Indolenz geneigt. Bei der vornehmen Gesellschaftsklasse [...] liebt sie, bis in den tiefen Tag hinein zu schlafen und die Nacht zum Tage zu machen. In ihrer [...] elegant und doch mangelhaft eingerichteten Wohnung [...] pflegt die Russin sich in ihren, im Winter überheizten, nach Patschuli riechenden Salons zu rekeln, auf den Diwans auszustrecken, gräßliche Parfüms über sich zu gießen, eine Zigarette nach der andern zu rauchen, seichte, meist französische Romane oberflächlich zu lesen, oder sich vorlesen zu lassen, ein wenig zu musizieren oder dem Spiel anderer zuzuhören, ihre Galans zu empfangen und sich die Kur machen zu lassen [...].<sup>35</sup>

It would be superfluous to explore every manifestation of this figure in Madeleine's work but an examination of several texts should uncover much of interest.

The topos first appears in the novella *Arme Ritter*, in which the young, dashing handsome Malte von Bärenklau, a Prussian officer from an impoverished, aristocratic family, falls madly in love with the super-rich, Russian 'Princess Betzkaroff', apparently born 'Togarin' of an ancient, Causcasian family. As the reader later discovers, she is merely a Russian trickster from Courland by the name of Maria Brodoff. Through 'schwindelerregende Manöver',<sup>37</sup> she was able to rob and cheat a whole series of Berlin businessmen. By the time Malte makes her acquaintance, Maria's trickery has already earned her a luxurious villa in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee.

Like other Slavs in turn-of-the-century German literature, Maria is in possession of uncanny psychological insight. When first introduced to Malte, she is

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<sup>35</sup> Felix Asnaurow, 'Passivität und Masochismus in der Kulturgeschichte Russlands', pp. 801-8 in *Sexual-Probleme*, November 1909, p. 803.

<sup>36</sup> Friedenthal, *Das Weib im Leben der Völker*, vol. 2, pp. 590-1.

<sup>37</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Arme Ritter* in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 1., p. 148.



quick to recognise his desire for her, giving him an irresistible smile with a touch of triumphant irony (p. 142). Later she will taunt him in French: 'Mon pauvre garçon, tu m'aimes' (p. 143). Maria also exemplifies the magical look, the otherworldly beauty of Slavic women in turn-of-the-century German consciousness: 'Wie ein Märchen sah sie aus mit ihrem rosigen Gesicht unter goldbraunem Wellenhaar' (p. 142). She also has the carnivorous, vampiric physiognomy that Marie Madeleine frequently bestows on her Russian women – a 'hochgeschwungenen, blutroten Mund, hinter welchem die weißen Zähne feucht hervorschiimmerten' (ibid.). Maria is furthermore the perfect embodiment of the legendary Russian penchant for luxury. As she declares to Malte: 'Ich möchte nicht leben, wenn ich nicht Glanz um mich haben könnte, Glanz und Pracht! – Ich kann gar nicht verstehen, wie manche Leute den Luxus als etwas Überflüssiges betrachten! Das ist doch das Notwendigste im Leben: Luxus!' (p. 145). Interestingly, not only an affinity for luxury but also a predilection for anything glossy and colourful seems to have been one of the many peculiar traits, which Germans felt characterised the Slavs. One of Freytag's characters notes, 'diese Polen gehen mit Allem, was bunte Farbe hat, besser um',<sup>38</sup> while Max Halbe's Slavic Annchen of *Jugend* (1893) 'liebt bunte Farben'.<sup>39</sup> Heinrich Driesmans would later elaborate that 'der Slave liebt das Glänzende und Gleißende, den Schein, den Trug, die Täuschung seiner selbst wie die anderen: er verbirgt seinen physischen und moralischen Schmutz unter kostbaren Gewändern'.<sup>40</sup> Finally, Maria displays the Slavic frankness that we will find elsewhere in turn-of-the-century German literature; as she tells Malte, 'was ich finde, das sage ich auch!' (p. 143). A typically sensual and iconoclastic Slav, she openly lives not by rules but for her own pleasure: 'Vielleicht ist das ungewöhnlich, – o, bestimmt ist das ungewöhnlich, – aber ich richte mich niemals nach anderen!' (ibid.).

At the same time, like most German paramours of Marie Madeleine's powerful Russian *femmes fatales*, the simple-minded Malte von Bärenklau is feminised. He stands in awe of Maria – of the 'kapriziösen Wechsel ihrer Gefühle', of her 'Verschwendungssucht' and in particular, of her 'Lebensphilosophie, die er nur zur Hälfte verstand' (p. 145). According to Albert Friedenthal's study, however, Malte need not be ashamed of his lack of understanding. The Russian woman, it seems, likes to develop 'philosophische Lebensanschauungen' but her ideas are 'fast immer

<sup>38</sup> Freytag, *Soll und Haben*, vol. 2, p. 48.

<sup>39</sup> Max Halbe, *Jugend*. Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1908, p. 7.

konfus; sie sind an keine Basis gebunden und streben keinem erkennbaren Ziele zu'.<sup>41</sup> Maria, for her part, calls Malte 'mein, süßer, dummer, blonder Junge!' (p. 147). Thus, Malte becomes a blond plaything that Maria is even willing to pay for, when, for instance, she settles his debts in one swipe (p. 145). The foolish Teuton Malte unflaggingly believes not only that Maria is a true princess but also that they will very soon be married. Yet, at one point, when Malte tells her how hard it is to wait for the big day, the libidinous Slavic woman invites him to make love to her at once:

Sie hob sein blondes Haupt empor und schaute ihn an; ein gefährliches  
Leuchten war in ihren dunklen Augenstirnen: 'Wird dir das Warten so schwer  
-- wie mir --?'

Die beiden letzten Worte hatte sie tonlos gesprochen wie einen Hauch, – aber  
er verstand! (pp. 144-45)

Like later Russian women in Madeleine's work, Maria is a testimony that women's sexual urges – at least when there is non-Teutonic admixture – can be as powerful as men's. Further commentary on traditional gender roles is offered at the end of the novella, when Maria's crimes are discovered, the truth about her background hits the papers and Malte opts, like so many shamed Prussian officers, for suicide. Here, the narrator reproaches the hapless German: 'Nicht einen Augenblick dachte er daran, daß sie ihn doch wohl sehr geliebt hatte, die schöne Verbrecherin, – mit derselben krankhaften Liebe vielleicht, die sie für schimmernde Seide und für Edelsteine hegte' (p. 149). It seems the socially intrepid Marie Madeleine is asking why men should not enjoy playing the role of love object just as women have done for ages. Thus, even in this early work, we witness how the Russian *femme fatale* becomes a vehicle for Madeleine's iconoclastic brand of feminism.

### ***Das bißchen Liebe (1906)***

The premise of the beautiful and ruthless Russian woman who seduces a hapless, blond Prussian officer reappears two years later in Marie Madeleine's play *Das bißchen Liebe*. The protagonist here is a real Russian princess. Sascha Betzkaroff was born to a Russian family of the lesser nobility but, at eighteen, married a young millionaire prince who died two years later. Now she is travelling around Europe looking for amorous adventure. The first act finds her in Berlin, in the midst of an affair with the married Prussian Count Hans Atten, whom she is visiting after a brash horseback ride through Tiergarten. The Slavic Sascha is full of bizarre

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<sup>40</sup> Driesmans, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften der deutschen Blutmischung*, p. 178.

<sup>41</sup> Friedenthal, *Das Weib im Leben der Völker*, vol. 2, p. 595.

whims and her sense of fantasy is decidedly morbid. After her gallop, she wants to refresh herself with madeira, and when the reasonable Prussian lover offers her water instead, she retorts that he should at least let her drink the water out of his mouth, ‘wie aus einem roten Becher’, a proposition that prompts Count Hans to cry out: ‘Du Vampyr!’.<sup>42</sup> Sascha is clearly smitten with Count Hans but when he asks her why she loves him, she torments the older German: ‘Warum ich dich liebe? Vielleicht weil es bald Frühling wird, – vielleicht weil dein Schnurrbart so blond ist, – vielleicht weil ich heute geritten bin’ (p. 351). Later she adds: ‘Ich liebe dich, weil du so hübsch bist und so elegant, – ja, sehr elegant, Hans, du hast die famossten Halskragen, die ich kenne’ (p. 353). This brutally frank recognition of the capricious nature of love is a characteristic feature of Marie Madeleine’s Russian women, which never fails to frustrate their non-Slavic lovers.

Count Hans soon finds himself constrained to break off his affair with the Russian *femme fatale*, an undertaking that she renders exceedingly difficult. When he asks her to leave Berlin, she agrees on the condition that he accompany her. As the count is not nearly as wealthy as she is, Sascha offers to support him fully as they travel the world, paralleling Maria Brodoff’s emasculating payment of Malte Bärenklau’s debts. When Hans speaks of his duties, however, Sascha exclaims: ‘Pflichten! – – Schon wieder dieses verdammte Wort, das einem jedes Vergnügen verdirbt!’ (p. 361). She then argues, like Olga of *Die indische Felsentaube*, for a libertine existence in light of inevitable death: ‘Das Leben ist kurz, und für die ewige Seligkeit haben wir leider keine Garantie’ (ibid.). But the good Prussian Count Hans remains adamant, so that Sascha ends up departing alone for the French Riviera, where she quickly establishes herself as the prominent beauty. In particular, she is courted by a circle of French, colonial officers, at least one of whom she takes as a lover – the feverish Lieutenant Morin, who has ‘die seltsame zarte Schönheit eines kranken, jungen Indiers’ (p. 369). At the same time, she torments the ugly Lieutenant Barrier, who, lacking self-confidence, appears to show no interest in her. In order to prove her all-conquering appeal, Sascha pretends to be attracted to Barrier, so that he falls madly in love with her. When Barrier realises that Sascha was just toying with him, he commits suicide – an exhibition that fails to impress the brutal Russian woman.

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<sup>42</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Das bißchen Liebe* in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 1, p. 352.

Another person whom Sascha torments is the already established Riviera beauty, young Laura do Mauro, whose last name would seem to indicate not only Iberian but also distant Moorish background. Though Laura is a 'Beauté de diable' of 'Spanische[n] Typ[s]' (p. 370), the wittier and more exotically Nordic Sascha quickly steals all of her admirers away. At one point, for instance, when Laura and Sascha are together amongst the French officers, Lieutenant Morin praises Sascha's complexion: 'Diesen wunderbaren, rosigen Teint können überhaupt nur die Frauen des Nordens haben. Es ist die schönste Hautfarbe der Welt' (p. 382). Fuming with jealousy, Laura remarks that 'Teint [...] ist doch so Geschmacksache!' (ibid.). To prove her point, she claims: 'Auf dem letzten Karnevalsball sagte mir jemand, daß er den braunen Teint der Spanierinnen am schönsten fände' (ibid.). But to this, Lieutenant Morin heartlessly replies: 'Wie merkwürdig' (ibid.).

Adding insult to injury, Sascha treats Laura with a condescending irony that the latter seems to understand only partially. Laura, for her part, has a relaxed, seemingly Mediterranean sense of female unity. Rather than compete with Sascha, she would prefer to befriend her and compare notes. In the end she declares in frustration:

Wenn Frauen doch bloß offenerziger gegeneinander wären, dann würde man bald hinter die Schliche der Männer kommen! – – Für uns junge Mädchen wäre es ja so interessant, Frauen über ihre Erfahrungen sprechen zu hören. – Aber aus Ihnen Prinzessin, bekomme ich doch nichts heraus. Sie sind zu hochmütig! (p. 381)

Thus, with Sascha and Laura, Marie Madeleine presents the two opposing poles of non-Teutonic sensuality – the Mediterranean and the Slavic – which play a central role throughout the literature of the turn of the century. Here, Madeleine conveys that the brutal Slavic form of sensuality is far more seductive than the soft, Mediterranean form. It also seems to be more liberating for women. For instance, Sascha, like other Russian *femmes fatales*, places emphasis on the beauty of her male objects, asserting that she could love 'einen dummen und schlechten Menschen' just for his beauty (p. 382). Laura on the other hand exhibits the self-sacrificing instincts traditionally demanded of women, claiming that 'für einen Mann ist doch das Äußere ziemlich egal' (ibid.).

The play concludes as Count Hans, responding to a longing letter from Sascha, arrives on the Riviera, only to find that Sascha's love for him has since dwindled away. As the frank Russian woman tells him: 'Die Liebe kann gerade so schnell sterben, wie sie gekommen ist. Das ist wie mit den Blüten; die knospen und blühen

auf und sterben ab. Und dann kommen neue' (p. 395). She furthermore asks: 'Glaubst du denn, daß eine einzige Liebe für ein ganzes Leben ausreichen kann?' (ibid.). Despite Count Hans's consternation and Morin's hotblooded jealousy, which leads him to an unsuccessful attempt on her life, Sascha remains true to her nature until the end, when she declares to Hans: 'Ich bin stärker als du [...] und ich sterbe nicht um das bißchen Liebe!' (398). For a second time, Madeleine renders the Slavic woman an emblem of a female, erotic emancipation, which other races, it seems, are not quite ready for. As Albert Friedenthal confirms, the Russian woman harbours an 'Unabhängigkeitssinn, der sie mitleidig auf die Deutsche herabblicken läßt [...]'.<sup>43</sup> But just in case Marie Madeleine has not made the topos clear enough with Sascha, a brief appearance is made in the play by the 'Erbprinzessin von Hachingen-Büttendorf', who is of 'prononziert slawischem Typ' (p. 366). Like Sascha, she is capricious and luxurious, expressing the hope that her husband will someday forget his sense of duty and move with her to the Riviera permanently (ibid.).

### ***Das Armband (1908)***

In the short story *Das Armband* (1908), a Russian noblewoman is paired, as in the previous stories, with a Prussian officer who is peculiarly feminised in his blond beauty and simple, docile soul. Baron Alfred, 'der schöne Fredi', with his 'schlanken, eleganten Figur und dem hübschen, hochmütigen Gesicht' is 'recht oberflächlich' and 'ein bißchen sehr leichtsinnig' as well as 'kokett [...] wie eine Frau'.<sup>44</sup> It is essentially Malte Bärenklau from *Arme Ritter* all over again. Indeed, what Princess Vera Tetjanoff likes most about Fredi is his blondness, naiveté and conformity, which offer a contrast to her own iconoclasm: 'O, wie sie ihn anbetete, den schönen, blonden Knaben, diesen Normaljüngling im weißen Flanellanzug, der gar bedenkliche Augen machte zu ihren ausschweifenden Phantasien' (p. 275). This time, however, the Russian *femme fatale* is portrayed as more vulnerable. She is fatally ill and considerably more in love with the young Prussian officer than he is with her. On the Riviera, Vera beholds Fredi for the first time with her 'fiebernden Augen. Mit Augen, die sehr tief lagen hinter brutalen, slavischen Backenknochen und halbverdeckt waren von müden, schweren, bläulichen Lidern' (p. 274). Fredi for his part takes pleasure in feeling himself the object of Vera Tetjanoff's desire: 'Er strich

<sup>43</sup> Friedenthal, *Das Weib im Leben der Völker*, vol. 2, p. 593.

<sup>44</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Das Armband* in *Die Stelle, wo sterblich sind...*, p. 273.

geschmeichelt das sprossende, goldblonde Schnurrbärtchen [...]’ (p. 275). Just a few years ago, Princess Tatjanoff was ‘die gefeiertste [sic] Schönheit der Petersburger Hofgesellschaft’. (p. 275). Since her scandalous divorce, however, she has been travelling the world, mostly Italy and Egypt on account, so it seems, of her worsening tuberculosis. Indeed, much of her beauty has disappeared as of late:

Jetzt war ihr Körper von erschreckender Magerkeit, welche man unter den weichen Falten des duftigen Kleids erriet, ihr Gesicht war zerwühlt von Leidenschaften, – ihre schwarzen Haare schienen zu schwer für ihr mageres Gesicht, nur ihre Lippen waren überraschend jugendlich, waren voll und blühend rot, und hinter diesen Lippen leuchteten schimmernde, strahlende Zähne wie feuchte, schneeweiße Blumenknospen. (p. 275)

Thus, we observe that Vera still has the requisite beast-like jaw and teeth of the Russian woman, which beguile young Fredi. In what seems to be a nod to Edgar Allan Poe’s short story *Berenice* (1835), Vera, on her deathbed, ends up bequeathing Fredi a bracelet lined with her teeth. The rest of the story reveals itself to be a typically kitsch-perverse burlesque. Years later, when Fredi has virtually forgotten his deceased Russian mistress, he accidentally pokes out his young German wife’s eye with the tooth-bracelet on their wedding night.

### ***Der Mutterkuß* (1913)**

The short story *Der Mutterkuß* is notable for its portrayal of a particularly exuberant Russian *femme fatale*. Olga Kyrillowna, a guest at a Riviera pension, is happy to an uncanny degree, smiling all the while ‘mit ihrem schamlos süßen Lächeln’.<sup>45</sup> She is also happy in society and happy alone, when she reposes in her room and admires her belongings like a true, decadent dandy: ‘Dann lag sie in einem ihrer hellseidenen, halb-offenen Schlafröcke auf einer chaiselongue, rauchte Cigaretten und spielte mit ihren Schmucksachen, die sie wie ein farbenfunkelndes Knäuel in den Händen zusammenballte, um sie dann sorfältig zu sortieren, ... zu streicheln... zu küssen...’. (ibid.). She even glides her tongue lovingly across her pearl necklace. Olga moreover wears clothing of a relatively erotic nature for her day and age. Her kimono often exposes her bare arms and also slips away easily from her neck, ‘und dann sah man die schneeweiße Haut hervorschimmern’ (p. 31).

Madeleine’s Russian *femmes fatales* are generally pale and have either dark or golden hair. The latter is the case with Olga Kyrillowna, who is something of a Nietzschean blonde beast with her ‘goldbraunen Haare [...] so wild [...] als hätten



eben verliebte Hände die leuchtende Mähne zerzaust' (ibid.) and her bestial way of laughing: 'sie zog die feuerroten Lippen mit einer so spielerischen Langsamkeit von den Zähnen zurück, daß es war, als entblöße sie dieselben, daß es war, als ob ihre Zähne nackt daständen hinter den seidenroten, kleinen Polstern ihrer Lippen' (ibid.). The predatory, feline image is only enhanced by her 'weichen, lässigen Bewegungen' (pp. 31-32).

Curiously, this conception of the Russian woman's carnivorous appearance seems to have resounded throughout the German-speaking world, perhaps through Madeleine's influence. In his poem 'Die Russin' (1915), for instance, the Trieste-born poet Theodor Däubler portrays the features of a Russian woman in a startlingly similar fashion:

Ihr goldenes Haar, eine luftige Krone,  
Verranke, verlor sich in offenen Zöpfen. [...]

Bald lachten die Sichel fast männlicher Zähne.  
Sie glänzten hinaus zu den horchenden Sternen.  
Es trug schon die Nacht ihre feurige Mähne,  
Sie schwang sich als Stute durch Steppen und Fernen.

Die Augen der Russin vermuteten Meere.  
Sie regten sich stets in der furchtbaren Stille.  
Es nahte ein Augenblick schrecklicher Leere,  
Doch unentwegt zuckte die goldne Pupille. [...]<sup>46</sup>

The golden mane, the carnivorous teeth and the androgynous allure of the Russian woman seem straight out of a Marie Madeleine story. They also anticipate Thomas Mann's Russian *femme fatale* Clawdia Chauchat, whose eyes equally evoke distant landscapes. The aura of steppeland mystery parallels Eduard von Keyserling's portrayal of Russians, which we will explore at the end of the chapter.

### ***Des Rausches Priesterin* (1916)**

Equally sphinx-like with her enigmatic smile is the Russian Xenia Barkoff of *Des Rausches Priesterin* (1916), who is perhaps more of a sensual *femme enfant* than a true *femme fatale*. Yet again, the Russian woman is paired up here with an upright blond North German, though this time he is an artist. Konrad von Groningen meets Xenia at a garden party on the Riviera, where she seems to hold an overwhelming appeal for the other male guests. But since Xenia is not stunningly beautiful – an

<sup>45</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Der Mutterkuß in Küssen*. Leipzig: Elischer, 1913, p. 33.

<sup>46</sup> Theodor Däubler, *Der sternhelle Weg*. Leipzig: Insel, 1919, p. 33.

anomaly amongst Madeleine's Russian women – the artist is curious about the reason for her universal appeal. At first, all that seems noteworthy is her childlike face, described as typically Slavic: 'ein weiches Gesichtchen, von der kindlichen Gutmütigkeit vieler Slavinnen'.<sup>47</sup> Next to a Frenchman, whose expression betrays his passion for her, Xenia retains the bearing of a child: 'Und sie, der dieses Gefühl galt, lächelte mit einem reizenden, harmlosen Lächeln, - wie ein Kind, das sich an einem Feuer wärmt' (p. 187). Konrad is introduced to Xenia but fails to solve the mystery of her appeal since he is disappointed with her shallow chatter.

It is not until he notices her one evening at a ball that Konrad understands. Xenia's appeal is evident in the childishly abandoned way she dances with her partners: 'Es lag eine Hingabe darin, die geradezu unbeschreiblich ist. Etwas Zärtliches,---- Hülflos-Anschmiegendes----' (p. 188). This too seems to have been perceived as a peculiarly Slavic trait, as Max Halbe's portrayal of Annchen would appear to verify: 'Es ist slawischer Schlag [...] etwas Empfangendes, weich Weibliches, Hingegebenes. Auch in der Art, wie sie sich trägt, gibt sich etwas Schmiegsames, Wiegsames' (p. 7). When the artist himself dances with Xenia, he falls for her just like the other men. She becomes a goddess-like figure: 'Selige Augen, - selige Lippen, als würde der Himmel aufgerissen und sie sähe gerade hinein in die strahlende Herrlichkeit. Und doch war so viel Erdenlust in diesem Lächeln, - Irdisches, ----, Allzuirdisches' (p. 189). In a pagan fashion, Xenia unites the sky and the earth – in symbolic terms, the soul and the body. She also blends her ego with her surroundings in the Slavic formlessness of which Bogumil Goltz wrote decades earlier and which will later become a motif in Mann's *Der Zauberberg*. For Xenia, the atmosphere of the night is a *Gesamtkunstwerk* and her senses blissfully meld together in an experience of synesthesia. When the artist accompanies her on a stroll through the park outside the ballroom, she experiences the distant music with her every sense except hearing: 'Wie schön diese Walzermelodien sind [...] ich trinke sie so in mich hinein. Jeder Ton ist wie eine Schaumperle im Sekt. Ach, --- tanzen ---, sich hineinstürzen in die Wogen der Melodie---' (p. 190). She also expresses a desire to 'drink' the smell of the flowers – 'den Duft trinken [...] ich will den Duft trinken von den roten Rosen und den weißen Orangeblüten' (p. 191) – which is no sooner expressed than achieved:

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<sup>47</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Des Rausches Priesterin* in *Der süße Rausch*. Leipzig. Elischer, 1916, p. 184.

Sie blieb dicht neben einem der Mandarinenbüsche dessen hartes, dichtblättriges Laub im Mondschein metallisch aufleuchtete. Sie beugte sich zu den Blüten hinab, die wie Büschelchen von Perlen zwischen den Blättern standen. Und sie sog die Duftwogen in sich ein, wie sie vorher die Tonwogen getrunken hatte. (ibid.)

From Konrad's point of view, Xenia herself becomes a part of this outdoor

*Gesamtkunstwerk*: 'diese Nacht voll Blüten und Sternen und diese Frau, die so gut hineinpaßte in dies Frühlingstrunkene Land' (pp. 191-2). Later, he discovers that even her emotional state is in complete accord with nature:

Es bestand eine geradezu seltsame Verwobenheit zwischen ihr und der Natur. Wenn sie so an einem Maimorgen durch den Garten ging und sich Sträube pflückte, dann war sie so harmlos und lachend und blühend wie der Morgen selbst [...] Aber wenn ein Gewitter in der Luft lag, eine elektrische Spannung, dann war sie nicht wiederzuerkennen. Ihr Gesicht war dann voll Qual und Leidenschaft [...] Am tollsten war sie, wenn der Sirokko wehte, der heiße Wind, der Afrikawind. Der reizte alles Ungezügelter in ihr auf, daß sie wie in einem wilden Rausche war. (pp. 195-96)

When she communicates her love to the artist, Xenia is like an oracle for the sirocco:

'und wenn sie dann sprach, war es als seien diese Liebesworte ihr von dem gluthauchenden Sirokko selber zugeflüstert' (p. 197). Thus, like a figure painted by the Czech Art Nouveauist Alphonse Mucha, Xenia is both an elegant *femme fragile* and a pagan Slav who worships nature.

Further underlining her pagan credentials, Xenia's house is loaded with artwork portraying the passion of love in every imaginable form and from all cultural traditions, including 'Liebesgottheiten wilder Völkerschaften' (p. 193). It is a dandy's collection that rivals any of Huysmans's *Des Esseintes* or Wilde's *Dorian Gray* in its thoroughness.<sup>48</sup> Xenia sits among all these earnest totems of erotic passion, looking innocent and childlike as always: 'Kindlich gutmütig, kindlich harmlos saß sie da, als seien all die Symbole verheerender Glut um sie her nur Puppen, mit denen ein kleines, braves Mädchen spielt' (p. 194).

In the end, the German artist, frustrated by Xenia's increasing emotional distance, pressures her into revealing that she is a morphine addict. Morphine, it seems, helps the Russian woman to sublimate her passion and blend spirituality and sensuality in a pagan way – hence the designation 'des Rausches Priesterin'. Xenia then encourages the jealous artist to keep her company as she gets her next fix and to provide her with controlled, erotic stimulation: 'Da bleibst du sitzen und nachher

<sup>48</sup> Marie Madeleine employs the same scenario – a mysterious Russian woman with a villa full of artwork depicting eroticism – in an earlier short story, *Liebe*, from the collection *Die heiligsten Güter*, vol. 2 (1912) (Leipzig: Elischer, 1912).

küßt du mir die Fingerspitzen. Aber bloß ganz leise. Ich will keine Liebe. Ich will bloß den Traum---' (p. 199). Since Xenia has smoothed out the rough edges of her sexuality with morphine, the artist must content himself with little more than the voyeuristic pleasure of watching her inject the drug, which she does clumsily, drawing blood. Guileless as any child, she chides herself: 'Ich habe es wieder schlecht gemacht [...] siehst Du, Liebling, wie schlecht' (p. 200). Then she lies back and waits 'wie ein Kind auf den Lichterglanz des Weihnachtsbaums, mit einem gläubigen, seligen Lächeln' (ibid.). As Xenia becomes intoxicated, the artist once again refers to her divine semblance: 'Eine übermenschliche Seligkeit sprach aus diesen hellen Sternen mit den verengten Pupillen' (p. 201). But what the upright Prussian artist is clearly unprepared for is an offer to drink from the divine elixir himself: 'Komm doch auch', bids Xenia, 'Komm doch mit in die rote Nacht' (ibid.). The mere prospect of the 'red night', a sumptuous realm of eternal sunset, is enough to send him into a reverie. Suddenly, Xenia seems to be 'die Verkörperung des Rausches selbst' (p. 202). The artist has a massive vision of *Rausch* – of people dizzy with love and drunk on alcohol, of artists in the ecstasy of creation and of decadents reposing in 'künstlichen Paradiesen' (ibid), high on opium and morphine. *Rausch* becomes 'der große Gnadenspender, der wie aus einem goldenem Füllhorn farbenschillernde Herrlichkeiten über die graue Welt stürzt' (ibid.). It is a vision of the ecstatic, pagan realm of Nietzsche's Dionysus.

It seems, however, that Konrad's Teutonic blood has a built-in safety mechanism for just such bouts of ecstasy. Suddenly, in disgust, he longs for everything that Germany stands for: 'Eine Sehnsucht nach einem vernünftigen, planmäßigen Leben, in dem Arbeit und Genuß wechselt, und der letztere überdies nur mit Mäßigung zuerteilt wird' (p. 203). This prompts him to abort his love affair with Xenia straight away. Only by chance does he see her again two years later at the opera in Paris – her paramour is another bewitched Teuton, 'ein reinrassig nordischer Typ' who regards her with 'derselben Verzückung' (p. 204). Some time after, Xenia dies under mysterious circumstances: 'Man weiß nicht in welchem letzten Taumel sie geendet' (ibid.).

### ***Der Blütenstrauch (1918)***

A couple of years later, in the short story *Der Blütenstrauch*, Marie Madeleine presented her last, in-depth portrait of the Russian *femme fatale*, who is this time

paired with a French officer, Robert Nadal – the author of a celebrated military book and a recovering opium addict. In order to give his opium-addled body a rest, Morin travels to the Riviera, where he is invited, along with other French officers, to a reception at the residence of an English lord. This provides Madeleine with the opportunity to contrast Northern and Southern races. The English women are described as ‘reizende, blonde, junge Mädchen und knochige alte Weiber, – hübsche und häßliche Frauen in buntem Durcheinander’.<sup>49</sup> Directly afterwards, the Southern French women are described: ‘Auch eine Anzahl üppiger, tiefdunkler Südfranzösinen waren da’ (ibid.). There is also a young Russian prince, ‘dessen Schönheit edelstes Gepräge aufwies’ (ibid.) and finally, there is the Russian Frau von Betzkaroff: ‘prangend in Jugend, in Schönheit und Glanz’ (p. 95).

In this case, the true background of the Russian *femme fatale* remains a mystery, though several possibilities, which are realities in one Marie Madeleine story or another, are considered:

Einige sagten, Frau von Betzkaroff gehöre sowohl durch Geburt als durch Heirat zu den allerersten Kreisen. Ihr Gatte sei früh gestorben und ihr großes Vermögen ermögliche der jungen Witwe ihr luxuriöses Auftreten. Andere erklärten, mit dem Mißtrauen, das man an der Riviera noch mehr als anderswo jeder alleinstehenden, schönen Frau entgegenbringt, sie sei eine Abenteurerin, einer jener eleganten Raubvögel, die mit farbenschillerndem Gefieder im kühnem [sic] Fluge die ganze Welt durchstreifen. Ein Kamerad von den Alpenjägern behauptete, sie sei eine Spionin, und warnte Nadal dringend, ihre Bekanntschaft zu machen. (ibid.)

Upon their first encounter, Nadal, normally articulate, finds himself overwhelmed by Frau von Betzkaroff’s presence, so that she makes fun of him in her clever, Slavic way – ‘in einer sprühenden geistreichen Weise, in dem eleganten Französisch vornehmer Russinnen’ (p. 96). Nadal recognises the danger but cannot stop himself from falling for the Russian woman with the beast-like jaw:

Diese schöne, fremde, verwöhnte Frau würde ja doch nur lachen, wenn sie von seiner Liebe wüßte, würde lachen, wie er nur sie lachen gesehn: mit blendenden, leuchtenden Zähnen zwischen einem hochmütig geschwungenen, roten Lippenpaar. Und auch dieses Spottlachen hätte er gern ertragen. Nur sie wiedersehen! (ibid.)

During their second chance encounter, Frau von Betzkaroff immediately recognises that Nadal has fallen madly in love with her and cruelly decides to use him as a means to fight off boredom. Like previous Russian *femmes fatales*, she makes love to her paramour early on, only to treat him dispassionately as a temporary plaything

<sup>49</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Der Blütenstrauch in Der Liebe Regenbogen*. Leipzig: B. Elischer, 1918, p. 94.

afterwards. When Robert asks her why she torments him so, she mocks his Frenchness, invoking the idea of the Slav as franker and more authentic: 'Ich quäle dich ja gar nicht [...] ich sage nur die Wahrheit, und das kannst du nicht vertragen. Ihr Franzosen könnt das alle nicht. Ihr lebt immer in einer Welt der Phantasien und der großen Redensarten' (p. 104). Frau von Betzkaroff gives Nadal the usual, Russian reasons for her love, already established in *Das bißchen Liebe*: because he is handsome and has 'heiße blaue Augen' or because he is passionate – or maybe simply because it is spring (ibid.). When he orders her to stop saying such things, Frau von Betzkaroff refuses, claiming that she wants to make him angry and abusive – Slavs, after all, are sadomasochistic: 'Das hab' ich so gern, wenn du so herrisch zu mir wirst und mich schlecht behandelst....' (pp. 104-5).

In order to stay with Frau von Betzkaroff, Nadal asks his superior for a month's extension of his leave. But the Russian lady has already decided to abandon the Riviera and her French lover. She torments poor Nadal again by relating to him her fantasies of returning to the North, where she will enjoy the pleasures of the Nordic countryside and Nordic men:

Ich will jetzt auf mein Gut in Livland gehen. Der russische Frühling hat einen so herben Reiz. Ganz anders ist es da wie hier. Dort ahnt die Natur nichts von geiler Glut. Ach, werd' ich mich da schön ausruhen! .... Eine sanfte Sonne über der endlosen Ebene. Die Weidenbüsche längs der kleinen Bäche fangen an, zartgrün zu sprossen, und das Laub der jungen Buchen riecht so bittersüß.....

Da will ich über die Wiesen reiten, und einer reitet mit....

Ein blonder Junker muß es sein, – ein hochgewachsener, schlanker,... ein Nordlandsman... (pp. 105-06)

In the tradition of Stratz, it is a *Rassenschönheit* fantasy, in which landscape and race fit together aesthetically. Frau von Betzkaroff, it seems, enjoys sampling different races, just like King Amasis in Madeleine's *Katzen*. Nadal comes close to strangling her after she gives voice to this fantasy, but then falls to her feet asking for forgiveness. Frau von Betzkaroff, for her part, shows no fear at all. Like Sascha of *Das bißchen Liebe*, she proves herself unconquerable and virtually immortal. Ultimately, she departs without saying goodbye, leaving Nadal a cruel letter in which she thanks him for the ardour that he gave her and advises him to think of her if he wishes but forget her if he can (p. 107).

In a twist on *Des Rausches Priesterin*, the Russian *femme fatale*, rather than being an opiate addict, is herself likened to an opiate. As Nadal reflects: 'War diese Passion von ihm denn nicht eben so gefährlich wie früher sein Hang zum



Opiumrauchen?’ (p. 100). At the end of the story, as the reader can easily predict, Nadal will take up opium again as a consolation. Thus, as in Thomas Mann’s work, the allure of the Slav is something dark and unwholesome, linked to obsession, addiction, and/or illness. In light of the conclusion of *Des Rausches Priesterin*, however, it seems also that Frenchmen are not as robust as Germans when it comes to Slavic temptations.

### A Polish Dandy

Aside from the icon of the Russian *femme fatale*, Slavs are infrequent in Madeleine’s work. Slavic men are particularly rare and usually appear in a less appealing light, as in the aforementioned *Die Königin Kriemhilde*, or another short story, *Die richtige Behandlung* (1908). Here, Madeleine presents an utterly repulsive Russian prince, who has an ‘arroganten, böartigen Charakter’ (p. 278),<sup>50</sup> lives only for ‘die sinnliche Liebe’ (ibid.) and whose physiognomy is marked by various races of the Asian steppes. He has a ‘Tatarenschädel, mit [...] kleinen, stechenden, dunklen Augen’ (p. 277), a ‘Kalmückennase’ and a ‘häßlichen, dunklen Teint’ (p. 278).

In the late short story *Töchterlein* (1926), however, Madeleine portrays an attractive Slavic male, who is nonetheless just as racially typecast as any of her other Slavic characters, if not more so. The half-Polish Herbert Kaminsky, a native of Berlin, exhibits the peculiarly dandyish and libidinous inclinations of the mixed-race type – as an adolescent, for instance, he runs away from home to follow a cabaret artist on her provincial tour. His peculiarly Slavic character is also quite apparent. Madeleine provides a detailed inventory of both the physical and psychological aspects of his race:

Er war unstreitig ein hübscher Junge mit seiner hohen, schlanken Gestalt und dem feingeschnittenen, schmalen Gesicht, aus dem die dunklen Augen mit all der verträumten Melancholie blickten, welche wohl ein Erbteil polnischer Vorfahren war. So zeigte sich auch seine geistige Persönlichkeit slawische Anklänge. Eine schnelle Auffassungsgabe, glänzendes Rednertalent, lebenswürdige Anpassungsfähigkeit an die Ideen anderer, – andererseits eine beträchtliche Disziplinlosigkeit im Denken, Abspringen vom Gegenstand, und zeitweise eine Gleichgültigkeit gegen alle und alles.<sup>51</sup>

Herbert furthermore displays the pagan, Slavic inclination towards the occult; in his later adolescence he experiments with hypnotism and contacting the dead. All of these traits, as we will now investigate, are integral to the portrayal of Slavs in the

<sup>50</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die richtige Behandlung* in *Die Stelle, wo sie sterblich sind...*, p. 278.

<sup>51</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Töchterlein* in *Die Töchter des Prometheus*, pp. 206-207.

work of Eduard von Keyserling and Thomas Mann. While Keyserling's work provides further insight into the conception of the Slavic persona around 1900 (in direct contrast to Madeleine, his Slavic characters are virtually all male), a brief examination of Thomas Mann's Slavs will demonstrate the extent to which canonical works of the day also bear the mark of the racial typology introduced in this chapter.

### **Keyserling's Poles: *Die dritte Stiege* (1892) and *Bunte Herzen* (1909)**

Keyserling's first Slavic characters appear in his second novel, *Die dritte Stiege*, where Slavicness already takes on the alluringly shady connotation that it will retain in later Keyserling texts. The setting is Vienna, where Keyserling spent several years as a young man. The depressing cross-section of the Austrian capital offered by *Die dritte Stiege* reflects all of the young Keyserling's enthusiasm for the socialist cause and his ultimate, bitter disappointment. The extensive list of characters includes young, idealistic socialists from well-off families, pessimistic proletarians and repressed, embittered members of both the lower and upper-middle classes, stifled by class expectations of wealth and morality. The young socialists attempt in vain to awaken the proletariat to constructive action and to win the affection of the proletarian women they idealise. In this atmosphere of longing and frustration, the neighbouring and cohabiting Slavic world comes to represent the fears and insecurities of Austrian-German society. In particular, the Austrian-German upper-middle class is portrayed as vehemently anti-Slavic, paranoid about the 'Eindringen tschechischer Elemente' into Viennese society.<sup>52</sup> As to the characters of Slavic descent themselves, they are mostly of the lower classes and, as violent thieves or *femmes fatales*, would seem to confirm the upper-middle class's fears. But curiously, the aristocratic main protagonist, a sympathetic character, is also of partially Slavic descent.

Lothar von Brückmann is the son of a Prussian-German nobleman and a shadowy Polish woman, 'einer Lokalsängerin, einer herabgekommenen Polin' with 'übergroßen braunen Augen und dem Haar, das fast grau schien' (p. 11). A Slavic *femme fatale*, with the capriciousness and otherworldly beauty that will later characterise Marie Madeleine's Russian *femmes fatales*, she had seduced Lothar von Brückmann senior, causing his disownment by the Brückmann family, only to leave

him and their son for an American insurance salesman soon after. In light of this sad situation, a wealthy aunt had decided to raise the young Lothar on her estate in the Baltics.

Despite young Lothar's separation from his Polish mother, he early on exhibits the whimsical, foppish personality we have just observed in Madeleine's Herbert Kaminsky. Lothar spends his summers in blissful idleness outdoors, where he stares into the sky, 'drinks' the scent of the spruce trees and eavesdrops on the singing of the local, Latvian girls (p. 12). He has little propensity for 'geordnetes Lernen' (ibid.) and, as a young adult, exhibits the tendency towards nihilistic pleasure-seeking considered typically Slavic. He is distracted by a 'heißen Durst nach Vergnügungen' (ibid.), which he fully succumbs to as he begins his university studies. Then he starts to feel 'eine gewisse Leere und Müdigkeit' and is soon enough the picture of the blasé decadent aesthete, who, like Herbert Kaminsky, experiences 'zeitweise eine Gleichgültigkeit gegen alle und alles':

Wenn es Zeiten gab, in denen es um ihn nie laut und üppig genug hergehen konnte, so kamen hinwiederum Tage und Wochen, in denen er sich ganz zurückzog. Dann nahm er eine bittere und höhnische Art an, über das Leben im allgemeinen zu urteilen. Die überfeinen und vornehmen Vergnügungen, die er sonst aufsuchte, widerten ihn an. Er lachte über seinen Stand, seine Kameraden, selbst seine blonde Freundin von der Oper, meinte: die Gesellschaft, wie sie jetzt eingerichtet sei, biete doch nur sehr pauvre Genüsse, und sprach so wunderliche und ketzerische Ansichten aus, daß seine Freunde ernstliche Besorgnisse um ihn hegten. (p. 13)

It is in the idealism and camaraderie of socialism that the young Lothar finds a new, though equally deceptive, meaning for his life. After socialist activity in Leipzig and Geneva, Lothar is sent to Vienna to edit a new socialist magazine. Here he develops an infatuation with Tinni Tuma, a tall, shapely and sensual girl of Croatian descent, who, like Lothar's Polish mother, has eyes that appear 'wunderbar groß und schwarz' (p. 8). The narrator also mentions her wild mane of thick, black hair on numerous occasions and describes her forehead as 'niedrig' (p. 120), increasing her animal-like appeal. When Lothar first encounters Tinni, she is 'ruhig und behaglich' and scantily dressed, displaying her 'braune Nacktheit' (p. 8). But paradoxically, the indolent Tinni also has a propensity for overexcitement and even violence. At one point, she literally pounces on another girl out of jealousy. As a southern Slav, she seems to incorporate elements of both the enigmatic Slavic and hot-blooded Latin

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<sup>52</sup> Eduard von Keyserling, *Die dritte Stiege*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1986, p. 43.

personality.<sup>53</sup> For Lothar, Tinni becomes an emblem of unadulterated life, which he feels he no longer has access to. He desires the ‘Starke, Heiße und Wilde’ (p. 120) in Tinni, telling her at one point: ‘Du aber hast noch Kraft, die gewaltsam fortreißt. Das beruhigt, das sättigt’ (p. 201).

Thus, we are tempted to believe that Lothar’s racial admixture is at the root of his confusions. The young Lothar’s longing for sensual experience, his later attraction to socialism can be regarded as the racial legacy of his sensual and *déclassée* Slavic mother (indeed, Eberhard Kraus considered Russian socialism to be a racial phenomenon). Lothar’s desire for Tinni, meanwhile, can be regarded as both a subconscious longing for his mother and the magnetic attraction of a racial equivalent.

Almost two decades later, in *Bunte Herzen* (1909), Keyserling took the liberty of portraying a half-Polish dandy once again, this time with greater emphasis on the character’s Polish background. Though related, so it seems, to the German aristocracy on his mother’s side, Boris Dangello speaks German with an ‘ein wenig singenden slawischen Akzent und dem rollenden R [...]’<sup>54</sup> and his usual residence is in the Russian Polish territory somewhere on the other side of the border. At the onset of the novella, Boris is a guest at his German uncle Hamilkar’s estate Kadullen. Like the Polish men in Freytag’s *Soll und Haben*, he is exceptionally good-looking. Described as pale, with big, black eyes and long curling lashes (p. 309), Boris has already succeeded in winning the affection of his fully German cousin Billy. But Hamilkar, who disapproves of what he mockingly calls Boris’s interesting personality, refuses to give him his daughter’s hand.

As Wolfdietrich Rasch has already pointed out, Boris is an archetypal decadent dandy.<sup>55</sup> He cultivates a decorative appearance with lots of rings (p. 312) and a suit of cream-coloured silk with a carnation-red belt (p. 319). In fact, everything about Boris’s existence – his words, his manners, his actions – is cultivated, contrived and decorative. When Boris speaks to Billy of his love for her, his voice takes on its ‘leidenschaftlich singenden Ton’ and he intoxicates himself ‘an seinen Worten, an

<sup>53</sup> A parallel can be found a decade later in Maria Janitschek’s short story *Der Betrogene* (1902), which focuses on a truly bewildering dark beauty, the Croatian girl Elline Tavadar (See Maria Janitschek, *Der Betrogene* in *Die neue Eva*. Leipzig: Hermann Seemann Nachfolger, 1902).

<sup>54</sup> Eduard von Keyserling, *Bunte Herzen* in *Harmonie. Romane und Erzählungen*. Munich: Knauer, 1998, p. 311.

<sup>55</sup> Wolfdietrich Rasch, *Die literarische Décadence um 1900*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 1986, pp. 231-2.

seinem Selbst' (pp. 315-6). At one point, the narrator portrays Boris's foppish, narcissistic thought process in considerable detail:

Er fühlte sich, er sah sich heute besonders stark und deutlich, sich, den geliebten, schönen Jüngling mit dem tragischen Ausnahmeschicksal. Das gab ihm eine feierliche Erregung. Aber er wußte auch, er war sich ein bedeutsames Erlebnis schuldig. Billy gehörte dazu natürlich, das stand fest, und nun schmiedete er Pläne, dichtete eifrig an dem Schicksal des schönen, geliebten Jünglings. (p. 318)

The defining aspect of this hybrid aesthete, the essence of his 'tragischen Ausnahmeschicksal[s]', is his Polish pride. At the turn of the century, many Poles were vehemently and romantically patriotic, not least of all because it was necessary to win European sympathy for their occupied and maltreated nation. For Boris, however, the tragedy of Poland is more of an aesthetic trapping than a political cause. Polish history is degraded to the role of a seductive perfume. In hoping to secure Billy's hand despite her father, for instance, Boris melodramatically explains to her that it is his Polishness, and the tragedy and idealism that go with it, which her father disapproves of:

Ich weiß, dein Vater liebt mich nicht, er will mich demütigen. Natürlich, man liebt uns hier bei euch nicht. Wir sind die Unbequemen der Geschichte. Eigensinnige Idealisten liebt man nicht. Wer mit einem Schmerz erzogen wird, wer für einen Schmerz erzogen wird, ist unsympathisch, ich weiß. (p. 313)

In order to coerce Billy's love and support all the more, Boris explains to her his conception of Polish love, which equally draws on Poland's tragedy:

Sieh, wir Polen, die wir alle mit einer Wunde im Herzen umhergehen und deshalb einsam sind, wir verstehen die Liebe anders. Wir verlangen eine Liebe, die bedingungslos unsere Partei nimmt, ohne zu fragen, ohne sich umzuschauen, die ganz, ganz, ganz für uns ist. (ibid.)

Later, Boris modifies his conception of Polish love to taunt his German rival Moritz. The resulting dialogue is an interesting documentation of conceptions of Germanness and Polishness at the turn of the century. Here, Boris's idea of Polish love seems to be rooted more in the sense of the cruel Slavic soul than of Polish history. The topic arises when the jealous Moritz asks Boris about an affair he had with a dancer in Warsaw. Moritz insists that Boris got up to all sorts of mischief for her sake, so that he must have loved her. But Boris responds: 'Wenn ihr das im Deutschen Liebe nennt [...] so tut mir eure arme deutsche Sprache leid' (p. 325). Upon Moritz's sceptical request, Boris goes on to explain the nature of capricious Polish love: 'Die polnische Liebe [...] ist etwas unendlich Heikles. Es genügt eine Bewegung oder ein Wort, damit von Liebe nicht mehr die Rede sein kann, sondern – nun, mein Gott – sondern von allem anderen' (ibid.). As an example, he tells Moritz

about the love affair he once had with a very beautiful woman on a neighbouring estate. Every evening she awaited Boris in her park, but one evening he was almost an hour late. When Boris saw that she was still waiting for him under the tree, he felt a surge of love for her. But as he came closer, his mistress reproached him sarcastically for his delay. All of Boris's love disappeared at once: 'Das klang so spitz und säuerlich und alltäglich, daß von Liebe nichts mehr da war' (p. 326). He bowed to her, said 'Ich bin nur gekommen, gnädige Frau, um zu melden, daß ich heute nicht kommen werde' (ibid.), and then went on his way.

Moritz endeavors to seem blasé in the face of Boris's cruel and exquisite love story, worthy of a Don Juan or a Dorian Gray: 'Daran finde ich nichts Besonderes. Das sind so Dinge, die man erlebt, um sie später zu erzählen' (ibid.). But Boris has the last word: 'Ihr erlebt nichts und ihr erzählt nichts' (ibid.). Of interest is that Boris uses 'ihr', the second person plural, referring not just to Moritz but to all Germans. As Boris seems to be saying, Germans, who are proper and boring by nature, do not have such exquisite experiences as Poles, who seem to be born romantics, aesthetes and dandies. Upon further reflection, Moritz feels dejected and ashamed after Boris's story: 'Die Mädchen verliebten sich in andere, die seltenen Erlebnisse waren für andere da, ja er fühlte sein glattes, semmelblondes Haar, sein rundes Gesicht, seine hellblauen Augen als etwas, das ihm weh tat' (ibid.). It is evident that Moritz's shame also applies to his Germanness – in particular, his North German appearance: his blond hair, round face and light blue eyes. Comparing himself to the fine-featured, dark-eyed Slav, Moritz is ashamed of his Teutonic features just as Count Streith of Keyserling's *Fürstinnen* laments his German, boyish normality amidst his infatuation with the Jewish girl Deborah. In both cases, there is a sense of the German race as dull and prosaic in both spirit and appearance – as functional rather than decorative.

Boris chances upon further ways to accentuate his Polishness when Moritz compels him to go bathing with him in a nearby pond. Here, the oblivious Slav comes close to drowning, when he swims too far in and gets caught in a net of vegetation. Moritz reaches Boris in the nick of time, when Boris's head surfaces once more. At this moment, it seems that Moritz, as a magnanimous young German, forgets all his ill will towards Boris and wants only to save him. He ends up freeing the elegant but impractical Pole from the vegetation with German strength and efficiency. But Boris manages to turn even this misadventure into another exquisite experience, ultimately mocking Moritz for his German integrity in saving him



without a second thought. Boris insists that Moritz hates him, and he even asks Moritz whether he considered letting him drown or even drowning him himself. Moritz, taken aback, claims 'Nein, so etwas denkt man nicht' (p. 328). But Boris, intoxicated by his near-death experience, is fascinated by the idea:

Ach wirklich, an so etwas denkt man nicht, was seid ihr für Menschen, ich habe gleich daran gedacht, als du mir sagtest, wir sollen baden gehen; man hat schließlich keinen Katechismus als Seele im Leibe. Tun, ja das ist etwas anderes, man tut manches nicht, aber denken! Ich liebe es, solch eine Tat ganz nah an mich herankommen zu lassen. Es ist so, als ob wir etwas Seltenes, das uns nicht gehört, doch für einen Augenblick in die Hand nehmen und halten dürfen. Und dann, es ist so herrlich aufregend diese Spannung, wirst du es tun oder wirst du es nicht tun. Solche Lebenslagen müssen wir aufsuchen [...] (ibid.)

Again, Boris uses 'ihr', the second person plural, referring to all Germans, asking how they can stand to be so decent and comfortable, neglecting the dark corners of their soul and missing out on exquisite, psychological experiences. Thus, Slavicness once again becomes something darkly quixotic and cruelly honest, a willingness to cause and receive pain and to revel in ill will if need be and ultimately, a pagan revelry in the full spectrum of emotions, which, as we have indicated in the second chapter, was espoused by none other than Nietzsche.

For a more jingoist portrayal of this phenomenon, we might consider the work of Karl Busse (1872-1918), a less talented German author who continued in the nationalistic tradition of Gustav Freytag, imparting it with some turn-of-the-century *Nervenkunst*. In Busse's short story *Die Verräterin* (1901), a Prussian colonel tells of his uncanny encounter with a beautiful, young Polish *femme fatale*, Pellascha Nowicka, who had betrayed a heroic Polish arms smuggler to him, not out of respect for the Prussian rulers – she hates them – but rather because she wants to take revenge. The arms smuggler was her lover, but he cheated on her with the smith's daughter, who – this seems to be the crowning point – is no more beautiful than she is. Like a banshee, the hysterical Polish woman grabs the attention of the colonel and his men through piercing screams and then, as she comes to herself, reveals to the flabbergasted colonel the route that the notorious smuggler will be taking later in the evening.

The colonel describes Pellascha's appearance in a chauvinistic context evoking Stratz's *Rassenschönheit*: 'von den Reizen der Polinnen hab' ich nie viel gemerkt. Der Durchschnitt ist häßlicher als der Durchschnitt der deutschen Frauen. Darauf können Sie Gift nehmen. Aber wenn eine Polin mal schön ist – es kommt selten vor –

dann ist sie gleich sehr schön'.<sup>56</sup> Pellascha's unsettling beauty has the carnivorous, vampiric quality that we have observed in many of Marie Madeleine's Russian *femmes fatales*: 'dunkle, brennende Augen, und ein Mund – alle Wetter! Gleichsam beutegierig, die Lippen durstig gewölbt, voll und rot. Als wären sie mit schwarzer Kohle nachgezogen, traten die Brauen scharf über den Augen hervor' (ibid.). The colonel twice likens Pellascha to a 'Raubtier' (p. 1540), the same terminology that Marie Madeleine often uses for her Russian women.

Like Keyserling's Boris, Pellascha is madly patriotic, crying 'Gott segne Polen' in the face of the Prussian colonel (ibid.). But this sentiment is easily surpassed by her jealous hatred of the arms smuggler, which she also proclaims with a cry. Later, as Pellascha witnesses the smuggler's arrest, she loudly declares her revenge – until she sees the smuggler heroically trying to defend himself from the Prussian dragoons. Then she lets out another one of her bloodcurdling screams and, crying out the name of her unfaithful lover, attempts to defend him against the dragoons. After both are brought under control and led away, Pellascha stays by the enraged smuggler's side in a masochistic humility that almost surpasses the sadistic pleasure she had in seeing his arrest. The smuggler vows to kill her on the day that his hands are free and Pellascha docilely replies: 'Ja, Liebster' (p. 1542). The moment comes sooner than expected, as the wily smuggler prompts one of the dragoons to loosen his fetters a bit. In no time, he frees one of his hands, grabs a pistol and fires – not at his Prussian foes but into the heart of his countrywoman Pellascha. Then, satisfied, he states that the dragoons can retie his fetters as tight as they wish.

This is a particularly chilling example of 'Polish' love – impetuous, sadomasochistic and irrational to the point of national self-destruction. Germans often attempted to justify their control of Poland with the claim that the Poles were incapable of productively administering their land, but Busse would seem to be taking things a step further. He conceives of the Poles as so preoccupied with their dark caprices that it seems only logical their territory would fall into the hands of Germans.

### **Keyserling's Russians: *Abendliche Häuser* (1914) and *Fürstinnen* (1915)**

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<sup>56</sup> Karl Busse, *Die Verräterin*, pp. 1539-43 in *Die Woche*, 31 August 1901, p. 1540.

Keyserling's portrayal of Russians also confirms much of what we have already ascertained in regards to the turn-of-century conception of the Slavic character. Though more peaceable than the Slavic figures examined thus far, the Russian Count Schutow, a secondary character in Keyserling's *Abendliche Häuser*, confirms Keyserling's association of Slavs with decadence and oblivion. Schutow is a guest at the German Baron Egloff's estate towards the end of the novella and makes his first appearance at Egloff's engagement banquet. Keyserling provides an unusually detailed account of his appearance and demeanor:

Ein fremder Herr fiel in der Gesellschaft auf, ein russischer Gardeoberst, der Graf Schutow, der seit einigen Tagen Egloffs Gast war, eine große schwere Gestalt, Haar und Backenbart leicht ergraut, das regelmäßige Gesicht bleich und schlaff, die schweren Augenlider mit den langen Wimpern, die sich nur selten hoben, verdeckten graue, sentimentale Augen. Der Graf bewegte sich mit einer trägen Sicherheit, begrüßte und ließ sich vorstellen und musterte dabei ruhig und genau die Reihen der Damen. Er liebte es nicht zu stehen, wenn er aber saß, saß er gern neben der schönsten Frau der Gesellschaft.<sup>57</sup>

At once, we have a list of turn-of-the-century notions regarding Slavs: sentimental, lazy and sensual. With his 'singender Stimme' (ibid.), and his grey eyes staring 'mit unheimlicher Genauigkeit' (ibid.), Count Schutow ends up telling one of the female guests that 'wir Russen [...] wären ohne Damen verloren' (ibid.). The reason for this, claims Schutow, is that there is too much space in Russia:

Man ist auf seinem Gut, die anderen Güter sind ganz weit. Man geht auf die Jagd, nur die Steppe, und kein Mensch. In der Nacht schläft man auf einem großen Heuhaufen, um einen alles ganz weit und still, über einem der Himmel – nun ja, da fühlt man sich selbst so weit und leer wie eine große, große Blase. Da sind nun die Damen nötig, die machen es wieder um einen eng und warm. (ibid.)

Count Schutow confirms that it is pleasant on the haystacks at night but that the smell is too strong and intoxicating: 'man wachte am Morgen mit Kopfschmerzen auf, als ob man die ganze Nacht getrunken hätte' (ibid.). He further mentions that, in Russia 'wir singen viel, singen geht langsamer als sprechen, aber wir haben soviel Zeit' (ibid.). Thus, Russia is portrayed as a grand, Dionysian oblivion of wide and exotic expanses, sensual longing, intoxicating sleep and lazy singing. Schutow's Slavic accent is described, like Boris's, as 'singing', as if the Slavic languages have become, as a result of the whimsicality and idleness of its speakers, a sort of lovelorn crooning. As far as Slavic indolence is concerned, Count Schutow is so lazy that, despite his contented demeanor, he prefers not to laugh: 'Ich lache zuweilen ganz

<sup>57</sup> Eduard von Keyserling, *Abendliche Häuser in Harmonie. Romane und Erzählungen*, p. 564.

gern [...] aber ich höre lieber, wenn andere lachen, dann habe ich das Vergnügen und keine Mühe' (p. 565).

Startling parallels can be found in the racial theory of Heinrich Driesmans, who believed that landscape influenced man's reproductive choices and hence his racial make-up. Driesmans directly associated such Slavic apathy and sentimentality with the wide, cold expanses of the steppelands so atmospherically portrayed in

*Abendliche Häuser*:

Diese Mischung von Apathie und Sentimentalität, von Brutalität und feinsten Empfindungsfähigkeit ist das zuchtwählerische Produkt der Steppe, wie die Gegensätze von eisigem Fanatismus und warmherzigen Edelmut das der arabischen Wüste, von furor teutonicus und tiefem Gemütsleben das des germanischen Nordens.<sup>58</sup>

Though it is improbable that Keyserling had this passage in mind while writing *Abendliche Häuser*, the parallels once again testify to the peculiar ubiquity of certain racial conceptions in this period of German culture.

In the late novella *Fürstinnen*, Keyserling fleetingly portrays a Slav for the last time, employing the same aesthetics as before. Roxanne, one of several German aristocratic sisters, the *Fürstinnen* of the title, is to be married to a handsome and dandyish Russian by the name of Dimitri, who appears to be something of a cross between Boris of *Bunte Herzen* and Count Schutow of *Abendliche Häuser*. As Roxanne's sister Marie comments:

Ich finde ja deinen Dimitri reizend, sehr schöne Augen mit langen Wimpern, sein Schnurrbart ist wie aus bronzefarbener Seide, hübsch ist es, wenn er deutsch spricht, als ob er eigentlich singen wollte. Ein wenig stark parfümiert ist er, aber gutes Parfum, Peau d'Espagne und etwas Süßes, ich glaube Heliotrop.<sup>59</sup>

Another sister, Eleonore, elaborates that Dimitri has pretty eyes that are sad when he laughs, to which Roxanne responds:

Ja, sie sind traurig [...] Dimitri ist ja so heiter und amüsant, aber auf dem Grunde seines Wesens liegt etwas Trauriges. Schon seine Stimme. Wenn er von seiner Heimat erzählt, von Steppen, die blühen, und von Tataren mit kleinen schiefen Augen, immer klingt etwas Melancholisches mit. (ibid.)

It seems that Keyserling has simply borrowed traits from his previous Slavic figures: the singing voice, the foppishness, the seductively tragic-romantic persona and the sense of the Slav as stemming from a mysterious, Eastern atmosphere (with the mention of the Tatars as a reminder of the Slav's own, purportedly Asiatic racial background). Meanwhile, the talk of Russia and Russians prompts Eleonore to

<sup>58</sup> Driesmans, *Rasse und Milieu*, p. 161.

<sup>59</sup> Eduard von Keyserling, *Fürstinnen in Harmonie. Romane und Erzählungen*, p. 730.

conjure up her own fantasy Russian landscape. She remarks that when she hears the word 'Rußland', she thinks of a great plain under an eternal dusk: 'Ich kann mir nicht denken, daß dort die Sonne scheint; es ist dort immer Dämmerung, und in der Ferne ist eine große Stadt mit Lichtern in den Fenstern, und irgendwo in der Dämmerung singt einer oder weint einer' (ibid.). Her sister Marie then remarks that the Petersburg court is supposed to be the most relaxed in Europe. As always, the Slavic world induces feelings of fantasy, romance and sensuality in the minds of repressed Prussian-Germans aristocrats – Dimitri can be regarded as a sort of racial *objet d'art* in this fantasy world.

### Slavs in the Work of Thomas Mann

Thomas Mann's Slavic characters, such as the Polish Adonis, Tadzio, of *Der Tod in Venedig* and the Russian *femme fatale* Clawdia Chauchat of *Der Zauberberg* are almost legendary literary creations. Yet the racial-typological background of these characters has been consistently bypassed, even though Mann's language is at times so explicit that racial implications ought to be apparent to even the most heedless reader. Perhaps the most thorough study of Slavic figures in Mann's work – and one of the few to touch on racial issues – is Christian Schmidt's rarely cited *Bedeutung und Funktion der Gestalten der europäischen östlichen Welt im dichterischen Werk Thomas Manns* (1971). But in the end, Schmidt also underplays the racial aspects of Mann's Slavic characters, preferring to emphasise how they function amidst Mann's greater conception of the eastern world as a land of Dionysian oblivion. Schmidt is not wrong in his analysis, but he has only told part of the story. As we will now investigate, Mann also employs just the sort of racial-aesthetic imagery that we have encountered in works by Madeleine and Keyserling.

The first significant figure of Slavic background in Mann's work is Lisaweta Ivanowna of *Tonio Kröger*, a Russian artist who happens to be the protagonist's confidante, his 'Freundin [...], der er alles sagte'.<sup>60</sup> With her stereotypically Slavic physiognomy – her 'brünetten, slawisch geformten, unendlich sympatischen Gesicht, mit der Stumpfnase, den scharf herausgearbeiteten Wangenknochen und den kleinen, schwarzen, blanken Augen' (p. 230) – Lisaweta seems to be construed more as an exemplar than as an individual case, as Schmidt has already noted: 'Daß es sich auch im Falle Lisaweta Iwanownas weniger um die Beschreibung eines individuell-

zufälligen Gesichtes handelt, sondern darüber hinaus um eine Typisierung, beweist die Wendung ‘slawisch geformt’ sowie der Gebrauch der bestimmten Artikel [...]’.<sup>61</sup> Lisaweta’s personality is also racially typecast. Just as her face is ‘slawisch geformt’ so is her way of interacting. Frank, emancipated, astute and a bit cruel, Lisaweta is able to decipher and manipulate Tonio’s thoughts and feelings. Of particular interest is the mocking, ironic and superior way Lisaweta has of relating to Tonio – the way she listens, patient, understanding and yet ironic, to his effusive, tormented and ultimately self-centred ponderings, only to cheerfully reveal that she does not take him particularly seriously. This is the method employed by Marie Madeleine’s Russian *femmes fatales*, in particular Sascha Betzkaroff of *Das bißchen Liebe*, to relate to their less self-assured acquaintances – and in particular to men who inevitably bombard them with jealous, infatuated and self-centred monologues of love.

Slavicness is also briefly an issue in Mann’s novel *Königliche Hoheit*. Prince Klaus Heinrich has some Slavic admixture on his maternal side, something which seems to have left little imprint on his own physiognomy but which is responsible for the otherworldly *Rassenschönheit* of his mother: ‘Einiges slawisches Blut floß in ihren Adern, wie man sagte, und daher hatten ihre tiefblauen Augen einen so süßen Glanz, wie die Nacht ihres duftenden Haares so schwarz’.<sup>62</sup> Later, in two of his most celebrated works, Thomas Mann associates Slavs more specifically with fatal beauty. The Polish Tadzio of *Der Tod in Venedig* and the Russian Clawdia Chauchat of *Der Zauberberg* rob the infatuated protagonists, Gustav von Aschenbach and Hans Castorp, of their virility, luring them to sickness and/or death. In both cases, the fatal attraction of the German to the Slav takes on particularly intricate racial connotations.

In the third chapter, we indicated that the protagonist Aschenbach himself has some Slavic blood on his mother’s side, so that his attraction to the effeminate Tadzio comes to represent a fatal surrender to his feminine, Slavic side – the side that is responsible, only in conjunction with the orderliness and sobriety of his fatherly, Teutonic side, for Aschenbach’s success as an artist. This surrender becomes the antithesis of Tonio Kröger’s exhilarating trip to Denmark, where the Germano-Latin

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<sup>60</sup> Thomas Mann, *Tonio Kröger*, p. 229.

<sup>61</sup> Christian Schmidt, *Bedeutung und Funktion der Gestalten der europäischen östlichen Welt im dichterischen Werk Thomas Manns*. Munich: Sagner, 1971, p. 58.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Mann, *Königliche Hoheit*, p. 65.



mix gets in touch with his sober, Teutonic paternal side after years of a decadent lifestyle in Southern Europe.

Like Boris of *Bunte Herzen* and numerous other Slavic characters, the Pole Tadzio is portrayed as startlingly beautiful:

Mit Erstaunen bemerkte Aschenbach, daß der Knabe vollkommen schön war. Sein Antlitz, bleich und anmutig verschlossen, von honigfarbenem Haar umringelt, mit der gerade abfallenden Nase, dem lieblichen Munde, dem Ausdruck von holdem und göttlichem Ernst, erinnerte an griechische Bilderwerke aus edelster Zeit [...]<sup>63</sup>

As Ritchie Robertson has already noted, Tadzio's appearance – his pale skin, honey-coloured hair and level features – corresponds curiously to the ideal of Teutonic beauty,<sup>64</sup> something which the comparison to Greek pictures 'aus edelster Zeit' only confirms. As we have seen, the early Greeks were thought to be blond Aryans by many German anthropologists, who often based their supposition on the fact that the ancient Greeks, in describing the hair colour of many of their gods, heroes and clans, made use of the same word employed for the colour of honey.<sup>65</sup> But far from being a young Siegfried, the Slav Tadzio is frail and effeminate; his pretty, honey-coloured hair frames his features and it seems that his mother and sisters – he is the only male in the family – spoil him utterly. Aschenbach notes that 'Weichheit und Zärtlichkeit bestimmte ersichtlich seine Existenz' (p. 373) and, at first, he is uncertain whether Tadzio is sickly or just overly pampered. When Aschenbach finds the opportunity to examine Tadzio more closely, his suspicions of Tadzio's sickliness seem to be confirmed in a certain unhealthy transparency of his teeth and a possible feebleness of breath. All this, however, merely adds to Tadzio's fatal appeal, in which eye-colour plays a peculiar role, as it will later with Clawdia Chauchat. Rather than the traditional, Aryan blue eyes, Tadzio has 'eigentümlich dämmergrau[e] Augen' (p. 375), infusing his countenance with a touch of Asiatic oblivion and morbidity. Wandering the sandy borders of the oblivion of the sea – where Aschenbach regards him in self-destructive enchantment – Tadzio becomes something of a seductive, male russalka, the water nymph of Slavic myth. Whether Tadzio consciously, even cruelly, beguiles Aschenbach remains uncertain. But it is a strong possibility considering the unabashed smile he gives Aschenbach or his willingness, even eagerness, so it seems, to remain in Aschenbach's proximity and view at all times.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig* in *Sämtliche Erzählungen*, p. 373.

<sup>64</sup> See Robertson, *Zum deutschen Slawenbild von Herder bis Musil*, p. 125.

<sup>65</sup> See Kraitschek, 'Die Menschenrassen Europas', p. 508.

In his beauty, Tadzio remains an anomaly among the Slavs portrayed in *Der Tod in Venedig*. His sisters are nondescript and his mother is described simply as ‘spitznäsig’ (p. 374). His jealous companion Jaschu is decidedly unattractive and markedly non-Teutonic, a ‘Pole gleich ihm’ but ‘ein stämmiger Bursche [...] mit schwarzem pomadisiertem Haar [...]’ (p. 379). But this also seems to be rooted in turn-of-the-century German conceptions of Slavs – we might consider the opinion, uttered in Karl Busse’s *Die Verräterin*, of Polish women as not attractive except in rare instances when they are extremely attractive. Indeed, the particular appeal of Tadzio seems to lie not in his Slaviness alone but – in the tradition of Stratz’s *Rassenschönheit* aesthetics – in the winsome amalgamation of the traditionally Teutonic with mere traces of exotic racial elements, in this case Slavic.

This is unquestionably the case with the appeal of Clawdia Chauchat, the Russian love interest of the blond, North German Hans Castorp in Mann’s *Zauberberg*. Thomas Mann’s fascination with race reaches its culmination with Clawdia, whose Slavic-Mongolian physiognomy is the object of so much obsessive detail in the novel that it is astounding how little scholarly attention it has received thus far. Again, Christian Schmidt is one of the few to have trespassed onto this territory, indicating Mann’s equation of Slavs – or ‘Gestalten der östlichen Welt’, as he carefully writes throughout his study – with oblivion and, when it comes to *Der Zauberberg*, with sickness, vagueness and formlessness in particular. He points out, for instance, the vague eye colour of Clawdia Chauchat and of Pribislav Hippe, a boy of similar racial stock with whom Castorp was infatuated as a child:

Bedeutsam ist auch die Farbe der Augen Chauchats [...]. Ihre blau-grau-grünen Augen erinnern an das Graublau oder Blaugrau ferner Berge, wie übrigens auch diejenigen Pribislav Hippes, die gleichfalls eine etwas unbestimmte und mehrdeutige Farbe besitzen.<sup>66</sup>

Schmidt also aptly demonstrates the frequency with which Clawdia’s Asiatic physiognomy is described throughout the novel (ibid.). But like other Mann scholars, he fastidiously avoids wading too deep into issues concerning race, so that we are left with little impression of its aesthetic importance in *Der Zauberberg*.

Both Pribislav Hippe and Clawdia Chauchat are nothing less than racial curiosities who beguile Hans Castorp with their racially contingent appearance and, to a certain extent, racially contingent personality. Despite his Slavic forename – or

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<sup>66</sup> Schmidt, *Bedeutung und Funktion...*, p. 132.

his 'heidnischen Namen[s]',<sup>67</sup> as the narrator calls it – Hippe is in fact nationally and culturally a German but is supposed to have distant Wendish racial background, familiar to us as a topos in Fontane's work:

Hippe [...] stammte aus Mecklenburg und war für seine Person offenbar das Produkt einer alten Rassenmischung, einer Versetzung germanischen Blutes mit wendisch-slawischen – oder auch umgekehrt. Zwar war er blond [...] Aber seine Augen, blaugrau oder graublau von Farbe [...] zeigten einen eigentümlichen, schmalen und genaugenommen sogar etwas schiefen Schnitt, und gleich darunter saßen die Backenknochen, vortretend und stark ausgeprägt – eine Gesichtsbildung, die in seinem Falle durchaus nicht entstellend, sondern sogar recht ansprechend wirkte, die aber genügt hatte, ihm bei seinen Kameraden den Spitznamen 'der Kirgise' einzutragen. (p. 168)

This 'Gestalt des "Kirgisen"', which had entered 'ummerklich aus Nebeln' (p. 170) into Castorp's life, later manifests itself with a vengeance in the form of Clawdia Chauchat, who bears Hippe's exact physiognomy. Thus, in an obvious but overlooked parallel to the characters Hans Hansen and Ingeborg Holm of *Tonio Kröger*, Hippe embodies a racial type that temporarily fascinates the protagonist during his homosexually tinged boyhood, only to become all the more beguiling in female form when the narrator is sexually mature. Clawdia possesses not only the same Mongolian eyes, which are folded and often glance decoratively to the side 'ins Schleierig-Nächtige' (p. 169 or p. 204) but also the same high, Slavic cheek bones coupled piquantly with Teutonic fair hair (she is 'rötlichblond' p. 298), thus indicating an Aryan-Mongolian racial mixture. She even has Hippe's voice, described as 'verschleiert' and hence furthering the peculiarly Slavic impression of decoration and mystery.

In the drunken reverie that brings about Castorp's first conversation with Clawdia, she fully blends together with Pribislav in Castorp's mind. At this point, there is a peculiar sense that Castorp's fascination with the Slav is inborn, that the 'Gestalt des Kirgisen' has haunted him since the beginning of time: 'oui, c'est vrai, je t'ai déjà connue, anciennement, toi et tes yeux merveilleusement obliques et ta bouche et ta voix, avec laquelle tu parles [...]' (p. 471). Indeed, it is noted early on that Clawdia's physiognomy 'ihm zusagte wie nichts in der Welt', in particular because it is 'von nördlicher Exotik und geheimnisreich' (p. 203). At one point, Castorp, like a child asking for a bedtime story, prompts a man from Petersburg to describe to him the exotically Nordic racial make-up of the Russians (with which Castorp is already quite familiar):

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<sup>67</sup> Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg*. Fischer: Frankfurt am Main, 1999, p. 169.

Auch von der dortigen Menschenart, ihrer nördlichen und darum in seinen Augen desto abenteuerlicheren Exotik, ließ er Herrn Ferge erzählen, von dem asiatischen Einschluß ihres Geblütes, den vortretenden Backenknochen, dem finnisch-mongolischen Augensitz, und lauschte mit anthropologischem Anteil [...] (p. 430)

Castorp, however, is not the only character in *Der Zauberberg* preoccupied with the Slavic physiognomy. His Italian mentor Settembrini, for instance, has a decidedly negative fascination with the Slavic countenance, resulting from his distaste for the supposedly irrational and barbaric Asiatic world. Himself portrayed as a western racial mixture (his grandmother was of Swiss-German extraction), Settembrini rejects the Slavs as 'Parthen und Skythen' (for instance p. 316) and refers to Clawdia's eyes as 'Steppenwolfslichter' (for instance p. 334).

At the same time, Hofrat Behrens, the director of the sanatorium and an amateur artist, has an ambivalent fascination with Clawdia Chauchat's appearance. His attempts to capture her 'vertrackt[e] Visage' (p. 356) on paper have failed and, as if in reprisal, he offers the delighted Castorp a detailed medical explanation of Clawdia's Mongolian fold, which seems almost pornographic in its blunt, revelatory zeal:

Nehmen Sie zum Exempel die Augen, – ich rede nicht von der Farbe, die auch ihre Tücken hat; ich meine den Sitz, den Schnitt. Die Lidspalte, sagen Sie, ist geschlitzt, schief. Das scheint Ihnen aber nur so. Was Sie täuscht, ist der Epikanthus, das heißt eine Varietät, die bei gewissen Rassen vorkommt und darin besteht, daß ein Hautüberschuß, der von dem flachen Nasensattel dieser Leute herrührt, von der Deckfalte des Lides über den inneren Augenwinkel hinabreicht. Ziehen Sie die Haut über der Nasenwurzel straff an, und Sie haben ein Auge ganz wie von unsereinem. Eine pikante Mystifikation also, übrigens nicht weiter ehrenvoll; denn bei Lichte besehen, läuft der Epikanthus auf eine atavistische Hemmungsbildung hinaus. (ibid.)

The portrayal of Clawdia Chauchat's personality likewise conforms to the turn-of-the-century German aesthetics of the Slavic race. Like Madeleine's Russian women, Clawdia can be summed up as frank, ironic and a touch cruel. Far from shying away from Castorp's amorous gaze, she regards him at first 'ziemlich rücksichtslos und zudringlich' (p. 174) and later 'unbestimmt spähend und spöttisch' (p. 199). When Castorp finally musters up the courage to approach her, she is flirtatious, playfully mocking him and certain of conquest from the outset. In essence, she is hardly distinguishable from one of Marie Madeleine's Russian *femmes fatales*. Paralleling Boris of Keyserling's *Bunte Herzen* as well, Clawdia is particularly ironic regarding the German persona, which she feels is highly developed in Castorp. As she says at one point: 'Vous aimez l'ordre mieux que la liberté, toute L'Europe le

sait' (p. 462). Later, she taunts Castorp as a 'bourgeois, humaniste et poète, – voilà l'allemand au complet, comme il faut!' (p. 464). Her willingness and adroitness when it comes to analysing Castorp and reducing him to a type – 'un petit bonhomme convenable' (p. 470) – also echoes Lisaweta Iwanowna's reduction of Tonio Kröger to a 'verirrte[n] Bürger'.<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile, regarding her own free-spirited persona, Clawdia remarks to Castorp, 'tu ne comprends guère ce que c'est: être obsédé d'indépendance' (p. 466). Like Madeleine's Olga Flammberg, she conjectures, 'C'est de ma race, peut-être' (ibid.). Clawdia, as it turns out, regularly meets a Russian compatriot to discuss a variety of heavy subjects including the nature of morality, which the two Slavs handle in a stereotypically Nietzschean way:

il nous semble, qu'il faudrait chercher la morale non dans la vertu, c'est-à-dire dans la raison, la discipline, les bonnes mœurs, l'honnêteté, – mais plutôt dans le contraire, je veux dire: dans le péché, en s'abandonnant au danger, à ce qui est nuisible, à ce qui nous consume. Il nous semble qu'il est plus moral de se perdre et même de se laisser dépérir que de se conserver. (p. 469)

Thus, Mann also gleefully conceives of the Slav as immoral, eccentric and extreme – a picturesque conception that we have now observed throughout turn-of-the-century, German literature and culture. It follows then that Clawdia, though mocking and ironic towards Castorp, concludes their very first personal encounter with a barely indirect invitation to Castorp to make love to her, which the smitten German readily accepts. Yet Clawdia has also made it clear that it will be unlikely for Castorp to see her again afterwards. As it happens, she plans to leave the sanatorium the next day. Still, Castorp ends up spending years there, desperately awaiting her return. Therefore, Clawdia further corresponds to Marie Madeleine's Russian *femmes fatales* in that she readily gives herself to her admirers, tormenting them afterwards rather than beforehand with her elusiveness. At the same time, we can regard Castorp as cognate to the innocent, blond Teutonic playthings, for which Madeleine's Russian *femmes fatales* have a particular fondness.

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<sup>68</sup> Thomas Mann, *Tonio Kröger*, p. 240.

## **CHAPTER 6: THE AESTHETICS OF THE LATIN RACE**

Employed as a racial term, the word 'Latin' can be as problematic as the word 'Teutonic'. Like the latter, it is intended as a translation of a common word in turn-of-the-century German racial discourse: 'romanisch' or its less frequent equivalents 'lateinisch' and 'latinisch'. Though 'romanisch', like the English word 'Romance', is essentially a linguistic term, referring to languages derived from Latin, it was increasingly employed in the same fashion as 'germanisch' – to indicate a racial type that was purported to inhabit the areas where particular languages were spoken. The German conception of the appearance and persona of the 'romanischer Rasse' was and still is fairly straightforward. Like the word 'südländisch', which is now more common in German, the word 'romanisch' continues to conjure up the images of olive-skinned, dark-haired and almond-eyed beings with a tendency to gesticulate and openly express emotions and sensuality. The conception of the origins and whereabouts of the Latin racial type, however, is one of the more complex and perfidious points in turn-of-the-century German racial theory. Though named after an Indo-European language group, the Latin racial type was thought to contain a considerable portion of the dark, sensual blood of Europe's pre-Indo-European inhabitants, just as the Slavic racial type was thought to contain a considerable portion of Mongolian blood. Like Slavs, Latin people might speak an Indo-European tongue but their roaming Aryan forefathers, the Latins, had supposedly interbred so much with the indigenous peoples of old Europe that they were regarded as a separate race unto themselves.

Whether the ancient Romans were significantly Aryan and hence related to the Teutons was a question unto itself. Since Rome was a symbol of cultural power, and yet far from a popular role model for most turn-of-the-century Germans, chauvinist scholars tended to disagree on this matter.<sup>1</sup> Similar controversy surrounded the cultures of Renaissance Italy and Spain and of early modern France. For many chauvinist Germans, like Ludwig Woltmann, these were the praiseworthy achievements of the descendants of conquering Teutons from the Dark Ages. For other chauvinists, they were the negative results of Latin conformism and concern for appearances.<sup>2</sup> For non-chauvinist Germans, such as the young Friedrich Nietzsche, in

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<sup>1</sup> Poesche, for instance, believed that the Romans were never truly Aryan. See Poesche, *Die Arier*, p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance, Chamberlain's diatribe 'Die angebliche Renaissance' in his *Grundlagen*, pp. 847-850.



*Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872) or Eduard von Keyserling, in *Zur Psychologie des Komforts* (1905), the races of both ancient Greece and Rome were just as they are often perceived as being today: sensual and ecstatic, in a likeable fashion, and not particularly blond and Aryan.

There was further speculation regarding the relationship of the Latin race to the so-called Celtic race. In many scholars' conceptions, both races had more or less the same make-up since they were both thought to be formerly Aryan tribes that arrived in Europe early on, intermixing heavily with the dark, indigenous peoples. Hence, Julius Langbehn, Heinrich Driesmans and others made use of the general term 'keltoromanisch' alongside 'romanisch'. Regarding the Celtic-Latin racial element in France, some scholars and writers also made use of the word 'gallomanisch' as well as just plain 'gallisch', referring to the Celtic Gauls. Still others simply used the word 'italienisch'. All these terms refer to the same racial type. The Celtic Gauls were thought to have been significantly non-Aryan by the time they were conquered by the Romans, and the ensuing racial melange was thought to have been even more non-Aryan by the time the Teutonic Franks initiated their colonisation. As early as 1789, Abbé Sieyès, in his revolutionary tractate *Qu'est-ce que le tiers état?*, reasoned that the French lower classes were Gallo-Roman aborigines who ought to revolt against their Teutonic conquerors.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, many Germans felt that there was a good dose of pre-Aryan blood amongst their southern countrymen as well, since there had been not only Roman forts but also concentrated Celtic settlements in the South of Germany and along the Rhine. Mann's portrayal of the sensuality of Munich, which attracts the half-Latin Tonio Kröger, but maddens the puritanical Hieronymus in *Gladius Dei* (1902), owes much to this conception. For Mann, Munich is almost as much a part of the Latin world as Venice or Rome.

In the end, the term 'Latin' is highly inaccurate, since it was thought that a version of this racial type could be found not only in Southern Germany but also all over Eurasia, including Greece and the Near East. Though rare in turn-of-the-century German literature, the inhabitants of the latter two regions were generally portrayed as similar to the Latin race in appearance and persona. Some German scholars employed the term 'mittelländisch', or Mediterranean, to refer to this type, but since the word never occurs in literature – and since it is ultimately just as inaccurate as the word 'Latin' – it would not be appropriate to employ it in this study.

### Latin vs. Slavic

Some racial stereotypes die hard, in particular when they are based on a certain degree of reality. Though the racial basis of personality is a myth, most Spaniards and Southern Italians would agree that they belong to a warmer, livelier and more sensual culture than that of say, Lower Saxony – and no one from Hanover would be likely to contradict them. That a Sicilian is more likely to have an olive skin tone and curly, dark hair than a Dane is also a fact of life and one that carries neither positive nor negative connotations in contemporary Europe. Most Europeans of today, from both Latin and non-Latin countries, still have a developed conception of what comprises the Latin character and appearance, which differs little from the one they had a century ago. The only significant difference is that we now understand the Latin persona to be not inherited but learned, whereas, a century ago, it was thought that someone with Latin blood would still develop a Latin character even if he were raised by Teutons in a Teutonic environment.

The hot-blooded Latin male, the hyper-sensual and emotional Latin female, the excitement but also the unimaginative conformism of Latin society are still as much a part of European popular consciousness today as they were at the turn of the century. This continuity stands in stark contrast to the discontinuity of popular conceptions regarding Slavs. Many of the conceptions of Slavs explored in the last chapter seem to be specific not only to Germany but also to the turn of the century. Turn-of-the-century psychological portraits of Slavs are unlikely to strike a chord with most modern readers. The luxurious and eccentric *femmes fatales* and aesthetes, with their supernatural beauty and psychological insight do not seem to correspond to the Slavs portrayed in modern books and films. The decades of crippling, communist rule have nullified any sense of mystique that Western Europeans might be able to perceive in the Slavic world and have in fact prompted only the most unfortunate turn-of-the-century stereotype to persist, that of the lazy, impractical Slav, of ‘polnische[r] Wirtschaft’. When confronted with any manifestation of chaos and disorder, some older Germans are still prone to say ‘Hier sieht’s aus wie in Russisch-Polen!’ – in other words, this what it looks like when the Slavs are left to themselves. Slavs are no longer seen as glamorous, sophisticated and individualistic, and the idea of the seductiveness and sporadic, superhuman beauty of the Slav is only present insofar as

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<sup>3</sup> See Abbé Sieyès, *Qu'est-ce que le tiers état?*, Paris: Flammarion, 1988, p. 44.

Slavic women are increasingly well represented and favoured as bargain prostitutes throughout Western Europe. The turn-of-the-century, German conception of a Slavic physiognomy no longer resounds today and thus seems all the more to have been based on turn-of-the-century Germans' imagination. The much-fabled Mongolian fold of the Slav, though it does occur, is not nearly as prevalent as turn-of-the-century literature would lead us to believe. It is also not an image that can be found in modern-day, European consciousness. In the end, we might conclude that turn-of-the-century German stereotypes regarding Slavs were based much more on fantasy than were the stereotypes regarding Latin people.

Though the French are sometimes portrayed as a particular breed within the Latin race, there is nevertheless a foundational aesthetic behind most characters of Latin background in turn-of-the-century German literature. First and foremost, the Latin people, considered less Aryan than the Teutons, were naturally regarded as more sensual. Slavs too, were regarded as highly sensual beings but while Slavs were portrayed as overly fantastical and eccentric, Latin people were portrayed as exactly the opposite: as unimaginative and conformist. Only when there is foreign admixture, as is the case with the recurring half-Latin aesthete, do Latin characters display much in the way of originality. The full-blooded Latin character is more likely to be practical-minded and shrewd than whimsical and creative. In many cases, Latin characters seem to follow their sensual inclinations without any guile whatsoever. There is nothing of the Slav's psychological intensity. We recall, for instance, the piercing psychological insight and harsh frankness of Boris from *Bunte Herzen*, Sascha Betzkarov of *Das bißchen Liebe* or Clawdia Chauchat of *Der Zauberberg*. Latin characters tend to operate on basic, animal instincts tempered by conformist moderation. While the Slavic attention to appearance is foppish, the Latin attention to appearance has more to do with conformity. While the Polish aesthete Boris and any number of Madeleine's Russian *femmes fatales* dress up to make a statement about their non-conformist identities, Madeleine's Parisians dress up to conform to Paris's perpetual mating ritual. Latin characters can be sensual, emotional and even brutal but there is little of the sphinx-like mystique of the Slav. The Latin character never really loses his down-to-earth *joie-de-vivre* and affability just as the Slav never really loses his cold irony and dark romanticism.

### **The Latin Topos in German Literature: a Background**

Latinness as a racial concept entered German literature relatively late, certainly later than the concept of Jewishness and Slaviness, which is already apparent in Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben*. But the idea of Latinness was preceded by the age-old German, literary obsession with Italy. Ever since the end of eighteenth century, when Winckelmann and Goethe embarked upon their celebrated Italian journeys, Italy – the warm, verdant peninsula on the other side of the Alps – has occupied a special place in the German imagination. The idea of Italian sensuality and frivolity probably began even earlier, with the coming of Italian commedia dell'arte troupes in the early eighteenth century and the publication of the writings of Casanova (1725-1798), the archetypal Italian womaniser. In light of the contemporaneous burgeoning interest in the figure of Don Juan, based on a legendary, Medieval Spanish libertine, we might consider that the still prevalent stereotype of the hot-blooded Latin lover was already in its developmental phase well before the nineteenth century. At this point however, it is still Italy – not the Latin world as a whole – that is emblematic of southern alterity in German consciousness. Nonetheless, though it would take a while for it to acquire racial overtones, the German conception of the Italian persona quickly solidified. During his legendary journey through Italy in 1786-88, Goethe seems to have been particularly fascinated with Italian sensuality and lightness of being, which he attributed to climate more than anything else.<sup>4</sup> Goethe noted that although it was 'moralisch heilsam' for him to live amongst 'einem ganz sinnlichen Volk' (p. 137), he could still pardon anyone who reproved the Italians: 'sie stehn zu weit von uns ab, und als Fremder mit ihnen zu verkehren, ist beschwerlich und kostspielig' (p. 138). Such ponderings were not published until 1816, in the first part of his *Italienische Reise*. Thus, the fascination with Italy amongst the German Romantics can actually be regarded as predating their influence. Ludwig Tieck, for instance, had already thematised the Italian character in *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (1798). Set in the Renaissance, this 'altdeutsche Geschichte' chronicles the journey of the young German artist Franz Sternbald to Flanders and then to Italy to meet the artistic masters of his time. As his travels progress towards Italy, Franz ultimately finds himself accompanied by three young Italian men, Rudolph, Florestan and Ludovico. All are sympathetic figures characterised by intelligence, bravery and good looks, but also by a frivolity, sensuality and a

penchant for adventure, particularly of the amorous kind, which baffle the young German. Once in Italy, Franz is beguiled by the light-hearted and forthright sensuality of the women, who are generally characterised by the epithet 'schalkhaft'. These include the married Lenore – 'ihre schalkhaften Augen sahen ihn immer lustig an, ihr mutwilliges Gespräch war immer belebt'<sup>5</sup> – and 'die schalkhafte Laura', (p. 975) a young girl who, during a festivity, which becomes a 'wilde[r], bacchantische[r] Taumel' (p. 976), throws a bouquet at him exclaiming: 'Ihr solltet ein Dichter sein, Freund, und kein Maler, dann solltet ihr lieben, und Euch täglich in einem neuen Sonette hören lassen' (p. 972). Franz, however, never feels quite at home amidst this delicious frivolity, and though he respects many an Italian painter, he is disgusted with the superficial tendency to theorise and criticise art, which he encounters among Italians. Yet it should be emphasised that such differences are of a purely cultural nature. Straightforward references to racial differences are nowhere to be found, nor are anything but the vaguest of physiognomic descriptions. In the planned continuation of the novel, Franz was moreover supposed to discover that he himself had Italian roots; he was to discover that his real father lives outside of Florence and that Ludovico is his brother (see p. 986)

Following Winckelmann, Goethe and Tieck, the Italian journey was more or less obligatory for any German author, artist or musician who thought anything of himself, and the impressions of which the authors would write were set in stone before they even embarked on the journey: the admiration for the remains of the Classical world and the Renaissance; the love of the Mediterranean climate and flora; the enthusiasm for the relaxed and cultured lifestyle of the modern Italians; the bewilderment and ambivalence regarding Italian sensuality and Italian Catholic superstition. Heine's travels through Italy are particularly well-known. Lesser known, but perhaps more enlightening for our purposes are the travels of Ferdinand Gregorovius (1821-1891), who playfully conveys something of the menacing quality the Latin peoples would later attain in German literature. In his 'Römische Figuren' (1853), for instance, he describes Italians as a 'glückliches, kindlich heiteres, aber auch kindisches Volk',<sup>6</sup> but in regards to their physiognomies, states, 'Betrachtet man

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<sup>4</sup> Goethe, *Italienische Reise. Annalen*. Zurich / Stuttgart: Artemis, 1962, p. 54.

<sup>5</sup> Ludwig Tieck, *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen in Frühe Erzählungen und Romane*. Munich: Winckler, 1963, p. 968.

<sup>6</sup> Ferdinand Gregorovius: *Wanderjahre in Italien: Figuren. Geschichte, Leben und Scenerie aus Italien*. Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1883, p. 209.



[...] diese bronzefarbenen, schwarzhaarigen Kerle, so glaubt man wahrlich in das Banditen- und Räuberstahl des Romulus gekommen zu sein' (p. 213). He goes on to write of their "infernalischer Heiterkeit" (p. 214), adding that 'die ganze Versammlung [...] einen Marionettenanstrich [hat]' (p. 213). He describes the women more specifically as 'Wölfinnen und tarpejische Nymphen [...]' (p. 214).

Around the same time, we notice in the work of the satirist Bogumil Goltz (1801-1870) some of the first German attempts to categorise the vices of the Latin peoples, which we will encounter in so much fiction in later decades. 'Der Italiener respectiert keine Logik, keine zwingenden Beweisgründe,' writes Goltz, 'er ist ganz und gar Augenblicksmensch und Naturalist, der seine Sympathieen, Antipathieen und Interessen für die letzten Gründe ansieht'.<sup>7</sup> In regards to French superficiality, Goltz is even more uncompromising: 'Die tieffste Französin kann nicht die französische Flachheit, die Natürlichste nicht die nationale Unnatur, die Solideste nicht die gallische Wetterwendigkeit und Chamäleons-Natur verläugnen' (p. 127). For one thing, 'es fehlen ihr das deutsche Gewissen und das deutsche Gemüth' (p. 128).

Though Classical and Romantic German literature offered an essentially positive image of Italy, which continues to hold sway in German culture, nineteenth-century Germans were steadily developing a negative image of another Latin country, France. It has often been noted that the French Revolution and the Napoleonic invasions led to the German rejection of the Enlightenment, perceived as a quintessentially French phenomenon. Without racial overtones, the Germans of this day regarded the French as rational, pragmatic and shallow – themselves, by comparison, as romantic and profound. At this point, there was little equation of France with Italy in the German mindset. If anything, the Germans felt themselves to be spiritually closer to the ardent but disunited Italians than they did to the French. On the other hand, the French Enlightenment was also perceived as originating in the purportedly shallow, derivative and unspiritual tradition of ancient Rome, so that the seeds for an overall conception of Latinness were already being sown.

One of the deciding moments in the history of this conception was Prussia's defeat of France in 1870/71 and Germany's subsequent unification, which did much to mollify, though not necessarily improve German perceptions of the French. While the newly united Germans felt themselves to be youthful and strong, the French –

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<sup>7</sup> Bogumil Goltz, *Zur Charakteristik und Naturgeschichte der Frauen* (1859). Berlin: Otto Janke, 1904, p. 121.



those erstwhile bloodthirsty champions of revolution and enlightenment – seemed to many Germans to be in a state of degeneration and effeminacy, of over-refinement and over-ripeness. This seemed to be confirmed by the post-war French vogue for erotically charged, vice-obsessed decadent literature and art, which may have indeed arisen out of French feelings of political weakness and insecurity, and the corresponding need for escapism. And yet it was precisely the over-refinement and eroticism of French culture that continued to hold an intense attraction for many Germans. Paris was still the epicentre of the world – even more so than ever – and French art, literature and manners, despite the later protests from the likes of Langbehn, would remain highly influential for years to come. Far from seeming lowly, France was still the picture of nobility and cultivation for many Germans, while Germany itself seemed to many of its citizens to be dull and bourgeois in comparison. Nietzsche saw German unification and political strength as the death of German culture and Germany's ambivalent perception of the French around this time is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in Nietzsche's writing. In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886), Nietzsche romanticises French cultivation: 'die europäische Noblesse – des Gefühls, des Geschmacks, der Sitte, kurz das Wort in jedem hohen Sinne genommen – ist Frankreichs Werk und Erfindung [...]'.<sup>8</sup> Yet he also remarks on the artificial nature of this cultivation and its undercurrent of degeneration:

Im jetzigen Frankreich ist demnach, wie man es ebenso leicht erschließen als mit Händen greifen kann, der Wille am schlimmsten erkrankt; und Frankreich, welches immer eine meisterhafte Geschicklichkeit gehabt hat, auch die verhängnisvollen Wendungen seines Geistes ins Reizende und Verführerische umzukehren, zeigt heute recht eigentlich als Schule und Schaustellung aller Zauber der Skepsis sein Kultur-Übergewicht über Europa. (p. 671)

Nietzsche furthermore contended that the current representatives of French culture were nothing but sickly aesthetes struggling to keep afloat in a sea of vulgarity:

Auch jetzt noch ist Frankreich der Sitz der geistigsten und raffiniertesten Kultur Europas und die hohe Schule des Geschmacks: aber man muß dies 'Frankreich des Geschmacks' zu finden wissen. Wer zu ihm gehört, hält sich gut verborgen - es mag eine kleine Zahl sein, in denen es leibt und lebt, dazu vielleicht Menschen, welche nicht auf den kräftigsten Beinen stehn, zum Teil Fatalisten, Verdüsterte, Kranke, zum Teil Verzärtelte und Verkünstelte, solche, welche den Ehrgeiz haben, sich zu verbergen. Etwas ist allen gemein: sie halten sich die Ohren zu vor der rasenden Dummheit und dem lärmenden Maulwerk des demokratischen Bourgeois. (p. 721)

But rather than attribute this degeneration to the Latin strain in the French blood,

Nietzsche on the contrary glorifies France's North-South mixture as a potential asset:

<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* in *Werke in drei Bänden*, vol. 2, p. 720.

Es gibt noch einen dritten Anspruch auf Überlegenheit: im Wesen der Franzosen ist eine halbwegs gelungene Synthesis [sic] des Nordens und Südens gegeben, welche sie viele Dinge begreifen [...] ihr dem Süden periodisch zugewandtes und abgewandtes Temperament, in dem von Zeit zu Zeit das provençalische und ligurische Blut überschäumt, bewahrt sie vor dem schauerlichen nordischen Grau in Grau und der sonnenlosen Begriffs-Gespensterei und Blutarmut - unsrer deutschen Krankheit des Geschmacks [...]' (p. 722)

Thus, in Nietzsche's conception, the pronounced Latin racial elements in the French blood mixture are actually what give France a certain cultural superiority over Germany. As is well known, however, Nietzsche's writing is full of paradox – in the same work, he declares that peoples of mixed race are inherently weak, something which preoccupied the young, mixed-race Thomas Mann. Nietzsche also harboured some typically German associations of Gallic/Italian/Latin blood with eroticism and frivolity: 'Man muß schon mit einem gallischen Übermaß erotischer Reizbarkeit und verliebter Ungeduld behaftet sein um sich in ehrlicher Weise sogar noch der Menschheit mit seiner Brunst zu nähern...'<sup>9</sup> In *Der Fall Wagner* (1888), Nietzsche even proclaims: 'Das Haschen nach niederem Sinnesreiz, nach der sogenannten Schönheit hat den Italiener entnervt: bleiben wir deutsch!'<sup>10</sup> All that is truly clear is Nietzsche's fascination with racial nuances and his willingness to impart them with various, changing meanings. Thus, race – and particularly the Latin race – was already an aesthetic tool for Nietzsche as it would soon be for a generation of writers.

In the decades that followed, more straightforward and less charitable theories regarding the Latin race were fabricated. One of the first theorists to establish Latinness, alongside Jewishness and Slaviness, as an emblem of alterity, was Julius Langbehn, who was much more vehemently anti-Latin than he was anti-Semitic or anti-Slavic. Langbehn, in fact, had many good things to say about Jews. He was an admirer of Spinoza and Heine and was even fond of citing Rahel von Varnhagen. Like Fontane, he was more sceptical about the Slavs, though he still felt that they played an essential, if minor role in the Prussian blood mixture. And yet Langbehn vehemently rejected everything he felt was Latin, which may have in part been a deliberate, polemic attempt to foster a distaste for the culture that had so influenced German art for centuries. A decade before Ludwig Woltmann began publishing his work on the racial roots of the Italian Renaissance, Langbehn rejected the modern Italian race and its culture, claiming that the Italian art of old was really Teutonic:

<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft in Werke in drei Bänden*, vol. 2, p. 252.

<sup>10</sup> Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner in Werke in drei Bänden*, vol. 2, pp. 915-6.

‘So vornehm die alten, so unvornehm sind die modernen italienischen Maler [...]; das noch vorwiegend germanische Blut in jenen, das wieder vordringende keltoromanische Blut in diesen macht sich bemerkbar’.<sup>11</sup> As the negative, Latin counterpart of his Teutonic idol Rembrandt, Langbehn chose the French author Émile Zola, who is portrayed as the epitome of everything Latin and lowly. A diatribe on Zola allows Langbehn to list the unpleasant qualities of the Latin race:

Zola, der zwar in Frankreich geboren, aber nach Namen Herkunft und Temperament ein reiner Italiener ist, gehört künstlerisch hierher; er ist seinen malenden Landsleuten durchaus verwandt; Brutalität, Sinnlichkeit und kalte Berechnung, gelegentlich mit ein wenig Sentimentalität und Romantik untermischt, charakterisieren ihn. Alle diese Eigenschaften sind ausgesprochen italienisch und ausgesprochen antideutsch. [...] Das Krasse und Wüste, was seinen Werken eigen ist; ihr Mangel an tieferer geistiger Architektonik; die Unruhe und der Pessimismus, welcher sie erfüllt; hier und da ein verzückter Blick nach oben, der dazwischen fällt: alles das sind gallische Züge.’ (pp. 43-44)

Brutality, sensuality and calculation – these are qualities that one encounters repeatedly in the turn-of-the-century German literary portrayals of Latin characters. Decades before, Germans felt spiritually closer to the Italians than to the French. In the racialised late nineteenth century, the French are now potentially more Teutonic than the Italians. Only the distant, supposedly Teutonic past of Italy is estimated amongst chauvinist Germans – otherwise Italy is increasingly regarded as the grotesque heart of Latinness.

By 1900, in the aftermath of Chamberlain’s *Grundlagen*, an influential camp of chauvinist Germans centred around Ludwig Woltmann and his *Politisch-anthropologische Revue* were even more systematic regarding the idea of Latinness. For them it was clear that all Latin countries were in decay and that this was a result of nothing other than Latin blood itself, which was finally getting the upper hand over whatever diluted, Teutonic elements might still be left over from the Franks, Lombards or Burgundians. In his article ‘Niedergang und Erwachen der lateinischen Rassen’,<sup>12</sup> Curt Bühring, for instance, affects indignation at the fact that the ancient Teutons are still regarded as barbarians in Latin countries. He goes on to use this as a pretext to poke fun at a conference of representatives from the Latin countries plus Greece, the intention of which was apparently to awaken the ‘schlummernde

<sup>11</sup> Langbehn, *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, p. 43.

<sup>12</sup> Curt Bühring, ‘Niedergang und Erwachen der lateinischen Rassen’, pp. 169-70 in *Politisch-anthropologische Revue*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1903, p. 169.

Energie' (ibid.) in their race. In a characteristic German twist on Gobineau's theories, Bühring states:

Der Niedergang der romanischen Staaten beruht auf der dem historischen Anthropologen wohlbekannten Erschöpfung ihrer Rassen; und zwar wie Gobineau gelehrt hat, auf dem Verbrauch der germanischen Elemente, die in diesen Staaten nur eine dünne "aktive" Schicht bildet. (p. 170)

What is perhaps most disturbing, however, is that scholars from Latin countries sometimes concurred that their Latin roots were not particularly healthy. The eminent Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, for instance, explained in great detail that violent crime was often related to Latin blood. In a translation of his work from 1902 titled *Die Ursachen und Bekämpfung des Verbrechens*, German readers could ascertain that violent crime was most prevalent in the regions of Italy where the Latin blood was the purest. Meanwhile, the Lombard blood in northern Italy or the Norman blood in eastern Sicily purportedly ensured that their inhabitants were more peaceable than those of neighbouring areas.<sup>13</sup>

Such conceptions of the Latin race as degenerate and brutal were already prevalent in the German journalism of the day. In his article 'Geheimbünde und Verbrechen in Italien' for *Die Woche*, for instance, Gerhard Stein states that, in the Italian, 'ein leidenschaftliches, zu wilden Ausbrüchen stets geneigtes Temperament' is combined with 'der stillen Kraft, ein Geheimnis, selbst unter furchtbaren moralischen und physischen Leiden, zu bewahren.'<sup>14</sup> (1460) Just days later, in an article titled 'Der italienische Volkscharakter' in the *Illustrierte Zeitung*, a similarly large readership could furthermore ascertain that the Italian is characterised by 'Verschlagenheit' and 'Grausamkeit'.<sup>15</sup> Here even paganism and conspiracy are Italian racial characteristics:

Die Rassen von damals sind nicht spurlos verschwunden, nicht ausgerottet worden; genug des römischen Blutes ist übriggeblieben, und man erkennt dies bei jeder Volksbewegung, bei jedem Schrei und Kampf in den Gassen der Städte, auch wenn der Conflict noch so schnell vorübergeht. Durch die langen Jahrhunderte, in denen das Christenthum sich abgemüht hat, diese eingeborene Wildheit zu dämpfen und sanfteren Anschauungen die Wege zu ebnen, ist nicht viel mehr erreicht worden als eine Anhäufung von Aberglauben und ein unentwirrbares Durcheinander von heidnischen, altrömischen und christlichen Anschauungen. Der Hang zur Verschwörung, zur Cospirazione, liegt dem

<sup>13</sup> See Cesare Lombroso, *Die Ursachen und Bekämpfung des Verbrechens*. Berlin: Hugo Bermühler, 1902, pp. 22-28.

<sup>14</sup> Gerhard Stein, 'Geheimbünde und Verbrechen in Italien', pp. 1460-1 in *Die Woche*, 18 August 1900, p. 1460.

<sup>15</sup> B—o., 'Der italienische Volkscharakter' in *Illustrierte Zeitung*, 23 August 1900, p. 260.

Italiener gleichfalls im Blute. Keine Stadt, kein Gebirgsnest, keine Gasse ist ohne ein kleines Complot. (ibid.)

Finally, there is a list of various Italian attributes, which, according to the author, even distinguish Italians as a race apart from other Mediterranean peoples:

Man hat auf das warme Klima und auf das heisse, südliche Blut hingewiesen als Erklärung für den zu Gewaltthat geneigten Charakter des italienischen Volkes. Aber der Grieche, der Aegypter, der Eingeborene Algeriens hat ein noch wärmeres Klima und heisseres Blut, und doch sind diese nicht so schnell mit den Waffen bei der Hand. Die Neigung zur Grausamkeit und zum Blutvergiessen, die schnelle Widersetzlichkeit gegen jede Obrigkeit, der Hang zur Prahlerei und zum Grossthun haben beim Italiener eine tiefere Begründung; sie haben sich von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht vererbt, sodass man wol [sic] von einer erblichen Belastung sprechen kann. (ibid.)

Amidst such chauvinism, however, there can be no doubt that many Germans continued to harbour a great deal of admiration for the Latin world, in some cases exactly because of the images of sensuality that it evoked in their minds. Franziska von Reventlow, for instance, espoused neo-paganism and erotic openness and urged Germans to look to the French race as a sort of role model:

Warum sollte das moderne Heidentum uns nicht auch ein modernes Hetärentum bringen? Ich meine, den Frauen den Mut zur freien Liebe vor aller Welt wiederzugeben. In Frankreich ist man uns in dieser Beziehung, in der erotischen Kultur jedenfalls, weit voraus. Wir Deutschen müssen uns erst das schwere Blut, das kalte nordische Schuldbewußtsein und Verantwortungsgefühl abgewöhnen.<sup>16</sup>

At this time, it was still something of a tradition for German-language artists to spend at least a portion of their youth in the rapture of Paris, and many of the most influential, from Wedekind and Rilke to Hermann Bahr, did just that, while others spent a considerable amount of time travelling through Italy, like the brothers Mann or Eduard von Keyserling.

### **The Brothers Mann and Eduard von Keyserling on Latinness**

In the work of Thomas Mann, the portrayal of the Latin race is at first benignly exotic, and Mann luxuriates in images of southern *Rassenschönheit*. Years before he portrayed his Tonio Kröger in such admirable detail, Mann sketched a portrait of a certain Paolo Hofmann, who has a North German father and a South American mother: 'Der alte Hofmann hatte sein Geld als Plantagenbesitzer in Südamerika verdient. Er hatte dort eine Eingeborene aus gutem Hause geheiratet und war bald

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<sup>16</sup> Franziska von Reventlow, 'Viragines oder Hetären' in *Autobiographisches. Ellen Olestjerne. Novellen, Schriften, Selbstzeugnisse*. München: Langen Müller, 1980, p. 480.



darauf mit ihr nach Norddeutschland, seiner Heimat, gezogen.<sup>17</sup> These first lines of the story serve as an explanation for the events that follow, for as we will find, Paolo's Latin blood is his destiny. But typically for Thomas Mann, the story first provides several sumptuous descriptions of Paolo's racial features, which lend atmosphere to the text. Although Paolo is half-German and half-Latin, it is his Latin features, inherited from his mother, which predominate even in his childhood:

Jedenfalls war Paolo das Ebenbild seiner Mutter. Als ich ihn zum ersten mal sah [...] war er ein mageres Bürschchen mit gelblicher Gesichtsfarbe. [...] er trug sein schwarzes Haar damals in langen Locken, die wirr auf den Kragen seines Matrosenanzuges niederfielen und sein schmales Gesichtchen umrahmten. (p. 33)

Thin, black-haired, yellow-skinned and fine-featured, Paolo has the standard Latin appearance that we encounter in other stories by Thomas Mann and in the work of Eduard von Keyserling and Marie Madeleine. In this case, the yellow skin colour evokes not only the Latin skin tone, which, in the contemporary world we might designate as 'olive', but also his infirmity, the physiognomic testimony of which is later described in such a way as to indicate a possible racial link:

Er war übrigens schon damals kränklich, wie ich mich erinnere. Er mußte dann und wann längere Zeit die Schule versäumen, und wenn er wiederkam, zeigten seine Schläfen und Wangen noch deutlicher als gewöhnlich das blaßblaue Geäder, das man gerade bei zarten brünetten Menschen häufig bemerken kann. (ibid.)

Paolo, belonging to a 'fragile brunette' type with shimmering veins, seems to be an early example of the turn-of-the-century association of racial mixture with both physical and psychological degeneracy.

As far as Paolo's personality is concerned, it is equally typecast. His Latin hot-bloodedness is apparent early on, but it is undermined by what we might regard as a hint of Teutonic sensitivity and reserve. Like the later Tonio Kröger, the young Paolo feels an outlandish, but ultimately self-thwarted, passion for a cheerful, blonde, and unmistakably Nordic creature: 'Das kleine Mädchen, das es ihm angetan, ein blondes, fröhliches Geschöpf, verehrte er mit einer schwermütigen Glut, die für sein Alter bemerkenswert war und mir manchmal direkt unheimlich schien.' (p. 34). Paolo's confused Latinness asserts itself early on in artistic as well as libidinous instincts. At one point, for instance, Paolo's religion teacher discovers an inappropriate sketch of a woman under Paolo's bible.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Mann, *Der Wille zum Glück* in *Sämtliche Erzählungen*, p. 33.



As he reaches adulthood, Paolo's blood seems to drive him ever further South, as will be the case with Tonio Kröger. First Paolo ends up in Karlsruhe, then in Italy. Encountering Paolo as a young man in Munich, the narrator describes his exotic features once again: 'Mittelgroß, schmal, den Hut auf dem dichten schwarzen Haar zurückgesetzt, mit gelblichem, von blauen Äderchen durchzogenem Teint [...]' (pp. 34-35). The narrator comments that Paolo, from a distance at least, now makes the impression of an Italian model (p. 34); maturity, it seems, has balanced his features into *Rassenschönheit*, as will be the case with Heinrich Mann's half-Latin Lola Gabriel. Paolo has also traded the Nordic sailor suit of his boyhood for a more suitably Latin look; he is 'elegant aber nachlässig gekleidet – an der Weste waren zum Beispiel ein paar Knöpfe nicht geschlossen' (p. 35) – and in the half-Jewish *Rassenschönheit* Ada Stein, Paolo has found a new love object that suits him better than the blonde infatuation of his childhood. Paolo's passion for Ada is again stereotypically hot-blooded. At one point, the narrator likens Paolo's image, in Ada's presence, to that of a panther: 'Er machte, ohne daß ich genau zu sagen vermöchte, woran es lag, den Eindruck eines sprungbereiten Panthers. Die dunklen Augen in dem gelblichen, schmalen Gesicht hatten einen so krankhaften Glanz [...]' (p. 38). But Ada's parents reject Paolo's wish to marry into the family, and so, in frustration, he once again travels about in southern regions: 'Er hatte in den Tiroler Bergen gestreift, hatte ganz Italien langsam durchmessen, war von Sizilien nach Afrika gegangen und sprach von Algier, Tunis, Ägypten.' (p. 41) Upon encountering the narrator once again, Paolo explains: 'Ich fühle mich im Süden zu Hause, weißt du. Rom gefällt mir über alle Maßen!...' (p. 42)

Anticipating *Der Tod in Venedig*, Mann also presents Italy, its people and its climate, as a unified stylistic entity, referring to the 'schwatzenden und gestikulierenden Menge' (ibid.) of Rome: 'diese Stadt, die voll ist von lautem, raschem, heißem, sinnreichem Leben, und in die doch der warme Wind die schwüle Trägheit des Orients hinüberträgt' (p. 43). In moving to the Latin world and setting his romantic hopes on a half-Jewish woman – a fellow Nordic-Mediterranean mix – Paolo has merely found a proper style of background for his own particular racial 'style'. Paolo and Ada are in fact the first in the series of racially congruent lovers created by Thomas Mann. They will be followed by the Nordic Hans Hansen and Ingeborg Holm of *Tonio Kröger* the Semitic Siegfried and Sieglinde of *Wälsungenblut*.

It goes without saying that this early work, like the later *Tonio Kröger*, reflects Mann's own struggle with his exotic heritage. In *Der Wille zum Glück*, the sickly, half-breed aesthete is redeemed. Unlike many such characters in the literature of the *fin de siècle*, he is a sympathetic figure here, his features are pleasing to the eye, his personality, though hot-blooded, is not depraved, and his dreams are ultimately fulfilled before his early death. As Hans Rudolf Vaget has already touched on,<sup>18</sup> Paolo Hoffmann is clearly a reference to a well-known passage from Nietzsche's *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. Nietzsche claims that scepticism, the spiritual expression of weak nerves and sickness, occurs every time 'wenn sich in entscheidender und plötzlicher Weise lang voneinander abgetrennte Rassen oder Stände kreuzen'.<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche then adds:

In dem neuen Geschlechte, das gleichsam verschiedene Maße und Werte ins Blut vererbt bekommt, ist alles Unruhe, Störung, Zweifel, Versuch; die besten Kräfte wirken hemmend, die Tugenden selbst lassen einander nicht wachsen und stark werden, in Leib und Seele fehlt Gleichgewicht, Schwergewicht, perpendikuläre Sicherheit. (p. 671)

Thus, it seems that Paolo's personality is directly based on Nietzsche's conception of the 'Mischling'. Yet Nietzsche goes on to say: 'Was aber in solchen Mischlingen am tiefsten krank wird und entartet, das ist der Wille: sie kennen das Unabhängige im Entschlusse, das tapfre Lustgefühl im Wollen gar nicht mehr - sie zweifeln an der "Freiheit des Willens" auch noch in ihren Träumen' (ibid.). Thus, Paolo is a sickly 'Mischling' who, as a young boy, was disappointed in love. Yet he is untainted by scepticism, and the perseverance of his feelings and intentions in later life ultimately bring him fulfilment, however briefly he is able to survive it. Hence, Mann writes of the will to happiness, as opposed to the Nietzschean concept of the will to power, which Paolo, as a sickly artist, is incapable of partaking in. It is as if the young Thomas Mann, who was already an avid reader of Nietzsche, were trying to aggressively confront certain aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy that applied directly to him with less than flattering implications. Consciously or unconsciously, this early struggle with Nietzsche may have continued throughout Mann's life; the iron will with which he went about his life and work may have at least in part been a response to his philosophical idol. One might regard it as akin to the Jewish Gustav Mahler's

<sup>18</sup> See Hans Rudolf Vaget, 'Intertextualität im Frühwerk Thomas Manns. *Der Wille zum Glück* und Heinrich Manns *Das Wunderbare*', pp. 193-216 in *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 10, no. 2. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1982, pp. 208-9.

<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* in *Werke in drei Bänden*, vol. 2, pp. 670-1.

lifelong and equally successful struggle to create brilliant, Teutonic art and prove his anti-Semitic idol Wagner wrong.

We can only speculate as to whether Thomas Mann regarded his romanticisation of the Latin-German mixture in *Der Wille zum Glück* as self-applicable. It is all the more an interesting hypothesis, however, when we consider that in another story written not long after *Der Wille zum Glück*, we find that the Latin race, displaced into Northern Europe and with Nordic admixture, is equally romanticised. In *Der Tod* (1897), the Latin race becomes something of a pretty atmospheric trapping. The narrator of this diary-form short story has a young daughter, Asuncion, whose mother is presumably Portuguese. The narrator dreamily recalls Asuncion's late mother: 'Erinnerst du dich des anmutigen und flammend zärtlichen Geschöpfes unter dem Sammethimmel von Lissabon? Es sind zwölf Jahre, daß sie dir das Kind schenkte und starb, während ihr schmaler Arm um deinen Hals lag'.<sup>20</sup> It is an image of the racially distinctive human body and soul in harmony with its native landscape, which we often encounter in the work of Mann, Keyserling and Madeleine; the 'Sammethimmel von Lissabon', which evokes a soft heat and light, is a fitting backdrop for the 'anmütig[es] und flammend zärtlich[es] Geschöpf [...]'. Like Paolo Hoffmann, Asuncion's mother is a delicate Latino whose hot-bloodedness or 'flame' is undermined by a delicacy of constitution. And just as Paolo Hoffman has inherited his physiognomy from his mother, Asuncion has inherited her mother's physiognomy – except for her eyes, which have the tired and pensive demeanour that Mann will later associate with the Nordic race in Tonio Kröger. All in all, Asuncion is another Mediterranean *Rassenschönheit*:

Sie hat die dunklen Augen ihrer Mutter, die kleine Asuncion; nur müder sind sie und nachdenklicher. Vor allem aber hat sie ihren Mund, diesen unendlich weichen und doch ein wenig herb geschnittenen Mund, der am schönsten ist, wenn er schweigt und nur ganz leise lächelt' (ibid.).

While Paolo Hoffman's yellowish, Latin complexion serves to evoke sickness, Asuncion's Latin dark eyes and dark hair serve to evoke melancholy, oblivion and death. The narrator, who is apparently fatally ill, has developed an obsession with death, which he broodingly awaits, only to find that his daughter has beaten him to it, apparently out of grief for him.

Mann's *Tonio Kröger* marks a turning point in his portrayal of Latinness, from benignly playful to critical. Here Mann's alter ego Tonio Kröger dismisses the

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Mann, *Der Tod* in *Sämtliche Erzählungen*, p. 55.

Italians offhand as ‘diese fürchterlich lebhaften Menschen dort unten mit dem schwarzen Tierblick’ and the Latin people in general (‘diese Romanen’) as having ‘kein Gewissen in den Augen’.<sup>21</sup> A similar progression is also evident in the work of Heinrich Mann. Though the issue of race is rarely addressed in his early Italian novellas, in his *Zwischen den Rassen* (1906), the sinister aspect of the Latin world overshadows its seductive quality. Thomas Mann’s *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912), with its uncompromising portrayal of Latin filth and decay, went even further. Despite their disagreements, the brothers Mann took turns romanticising and then reproving the Latinness that they both perceived as flowing in their own veins.

Heinrich Mann’s *Zwischen den Rassen* can be regarded as the most definitive German text to deal with the ‘Latin question’ and it is above and beyond this one of the most racially obsessed texts of turn-of-the-century Germany. Its problematic subject material would have plunged it into oblivion, were it not for the scholarly interest that both Lea Ritter-Santini, in *Der Italiener Heinrich Mann* (1965),<sup>22</sup> and Christl Grieshaber-Weninger, in *Rasse und Geschlecht. Hybride Frauenfiguren in der Literatur um 1900* (2000),<sup>23</sup> have afforded it. Since both studies already offer much insight into the work, it is my intention to merely demonstrate how it ties in with the milieu of the day.

The protagonist of *Zwischen den Rassen* is the Brazilian-born Lola Gabriel, who has a blond, German father and a dark and comely Brazilian mother. Lola is sent at an early age to Germany by her father, who, having gone native as a young man, has gradually rediscovered his allegiance to the Teutonic world. As he writes to Lola from Brazil: ‘In Dir, meine Tochter, fließt, wie ich hoffe und glaube, ein vorwiegend deutsches Blut, und als deutsches Mädchen gedenke ich Dich dereinst wiederzufinden’.<sup>24</sup> But despite the blond hair she inherited from her father, Lola has quite a bit of Latin blood in her as well, which manifests itself at an early age in both her appearance and persona. She has a ‘leicht gebogene Nase’, which, before she reaches maturity, seems ‘häßlich und zu groß’ (p. 51), and during puberty she goes from being ‘häßlich und fremd’ to ‘fremd und schön’ (p. 52) – that is, to being a ‘Rassenschönheit’ – though she continues to dwell on her nose on more than one

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>22</sup> Lea Ritter-Santini, *Der Italiener Heinrich Mann*. Dissertation, Bologna, 1965 (translated into the German by Sabine Russ and available on-line at: <http://www.uni-lueneburg.de/f63/forschung/ihmf/ritter>).

<sup>23</sup> Christl Grieshaber-Weninger, *Rasse und Geschlecht. Hybride Frauenfiguren in der Literatur um 1900*. Köln / Weimar / Wien: Böhlau, 2000.

occasion. Throughout her childhood, she remains a friendless, eccentric outsider until the exotic beauty commencing at her early adulthood wins her much attention. Like Paolo Hoffmann or Tonio Kröger, the Latin-Teutonic hybrids of Thomas Mann's work, the child Lola also displays artistic inclinations – a desire to join the theatre and later a talent in singing – as well as worrying, amorous inclinations. Still a little girl, she falls in love with her shy, abstracted German schoolteacher and later with a local Italian accordionist. But she is disappointed by both when she discovers the unattractive sides of their respective, racially contingent personalities: the German's stiffness and tactlessness and the Italian's debauchery (pp. 28-31). Lola's early romantic inclinations, wavering between her maternal and paternal races, are fateful expressions of what will haunt her throughout her life. As an adult, she is torn between the excitement and brutality of Latin lovers and the tranquillity and boredom of German comrades, eventually opting for the latter, and hence paralleling Mann's story of Tonio Kröger, who rediscovers his allegiance to the North. The great bulk of *Zwischen den Rassen*, however, chronicles Lola's tragic involvement with Latin men and Latin culture. Accompanied by her Brazilian mother (who, upon the death of her husband, journeys to Europe in search of her daughter), Lola travels to the Mediterranean world with the prospect of finding a husband. She is courted by a series of Latin men, and it seems that her still youthful mother, who, like any proper Latin woman, is on the lookout for amorous adventure, is often her greatest rival. The young Brazilian Da Silva – not so coincidentally one of the proper names of Heinrich's half-Brazilian mother – is the first of these Latin courtiers to appear in the story. His physiognomy, 'sein schönes, groß gemeißeltes, fast bartloses Gesicht, in dem die Brauen sich berührten,' and his animal-like appeal – when he speaks, he moves his neck back and forth, 'wie ein vom eigenen Gesang berauschter Vogel' (pp. 74-5) – become something of an archetype for later Latin male characters in the story.

Already, the half-Latin Lola's ambivalence regarding her motherly race is apparent. As she reproaches the macho Da Silva: 'Es ist furchtbar [...] unter euch eine Frau zu sein. Bei uns ist der Mann unser Kamerad' (p. 80). This is a common element in the German portrayal of the Latin men: that they are instinctually brutal and reactionary when it comes to women – a result, so it seems, of their excessive sensual inclinations. As Da Silva himself confesses:

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<sup>24</sup> Heinrich Mann, *Zwischen den Rassen*. Berlin / Weimar: Aufbau, 1974, p. 39.



Wir Männer des Südens folgen allzu gern der zweideutigen Herausforderungen, die von der befreiten Frau ausgeht. Wozu kommt ihr her? Ihr verderbt unsere Frauen, daß sie sich ohne unseren Schutz auf die Straße wagen und, wenn wir sie ließen, sich im Café mitten unter uns setzen würden. Ihr verderbt auch uns, daß wir den schlaffen Kitzel der Kameradschaft mit euch fühlen möchten, wie eure heruntergekommenen Männer. Ich will's nicht. Ich will Ihr Herr werden. (ibid.)

Like other Latin males in the story – and throughout the literature of the day – Da Silva is, in the words of Lola, a 'beschränkter Gewaltmensch'. But being half Latin herself, Lola presently regards it as her fate to end up with this racial type, which is alarmingly uniform and omnipresent throughout the Mediterranean world. It is, as Lola says, 'der Typus, dem ich unterliegen soll. Die vorigen, in Paris und in Rom, waren vom selben. Dieselben zussamentreffenden Brauen, die harte Marmorfarbe wie hier, woraus jede Wimper, jeder Blutstropfen der Lippen drohend hervorstart' (p. 83).

In the Latin world, Lola feels tormented and yet drawn in by the Latinness all around her. She is repeatedly overwhelmed: 'Eine Wallung von Leichtsinn, und Lola war mitten darin, ging unter in der Jagd der nach Freude Fiebernden. Dann trat der Mann auf: einer derer, die sie im Blut hatte, die sie nicht vermeiden konnte [...]' (p. 93). But when Lola sojourns in the Teutonic world, she is quickly disenchanted as well. In Bavaria, she meets Arnold, who is established as the quintessential Teutonic male in his abstraction, introversion and individualism. Rather than attempting to impose his will on Lola, the shy Arnold prefers to take long walks with her in Bavarian 'Waldeinsamkeit' and to converse at length about heavy, intellectual subjects. Much to her annoyance, Lola, who once espoused just such Teutonic, male camaraderie to Da Silva, is not even sure if Arnold is actually courting her. Thus, her attention soon turns back to Latin men. An Italian nobleman, Pardi, has just arrived in Bavaria and his physiognomy and personality, which can hardly be distinguished from that of Da Silva and other Latin courtiers, excite Lola in this drab, Teutonic milieu: 'Diese anbetende Stimme, die einen einwickelte! [...] Brauen in einer graden Linie, Wimpern, die schwarz herausstachen aus dem lebenglühenden Marmorgesicht, und rot und sich darin aufbrechend die Lippen' (p. 156). With Pardi, 'die einfachsten Triebe wirkten, das Leben war frischer, ursprünglicher' (p. 167), and Lola even admires what seems to be the innate artistic bent of his Latin race: 'Pardi war kein Künstler. Aber er hatte das Blut von Menschen, die mit einem Griff durch die Luft mehr Kunst machten als diese hier, wenn sie malten!' (p. 191). After having



unambiguously wooed both Lola and her mother, Pardi returns to Italy. Lola follows him, mother in tow, with the intention of marrying. But as Lola had at one point prophetically remarked: ‘Das Temperament meiner mütterlichen Rasse schätze ich, wenn ich in Deutschland bin. Bei jenen aber sehne ich mich oft nach der deutschen Tiefe’ (p. 125). Early on during her latest stay in Italy, Lola is once again not certain which race she identifies with most. Though still enamoured of Pardi, she at one point overhears him talking about her with his Italian companions in rather sensual terms. This causes her to reflect on the difference between the Latin and Teutonic worlds:

Sonnig elegant und herzlich hatte es sich ausgenommen: alles grade entgegengesetzt den schlechtgekleideten, geistig hochmütigen Menschen dort hinten in ihrem Nebel. Aber wäre jener Arnold fähig gewesen, mit allen Leuten und zum offenen Fenster hinaus über ihren Körper zu verhandeln?’ (p. 211)  
 She is also increasingly ambivalent about the conformity of the Latin race, which stands in stark contrast to the individuality of the Teutons:

Alle waren aus einem Blut; und wie sie gleichmäßig schritten und sich kleideten, war sicher, meinte Lola, auch die Art, zu denken und zu lieben, bei allen dieselbe. Lola gedachte der Menschen im Norden, die sie verlassen hatte, wie an Sonderlinge, von denen jeder seinen kleinen verrückten Kreis lief. [...] Hier ließ sich keiner aus der Masse reißen: er wäre verloren und sinnlos gewesen. (p. 215)

One remarks here the far-reaching influence of Julius Langbehn’s *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, in which the German is conceived of as innately individual and eccentric.

Gradually, Lola grows completely disgusted with the foibles of Italian society: the jealousy, the vicious rumours, the obsession with appearance, the rampant adultery and the hypocritical, Catholic morality. Once married to Pardi, she also experiences the full extent of his sensual inclinations and brutality. Jealously surveying her contact with the other libidinous men in his circle, Pardi is himself wholly incapable of loyalty, having always led a life of the utmost sexual adventure. Towards the end, Lola discovers what the reader already suspects: that Pardi even slept with her mother shortly before marrying her. Lola’s mother in fact offered herself to Pardi on the condition that he would swiftly marry Lola. One wonders which is worse – and which is supposed to be more Latin – a mother who gives herself to her daughter’s fiancé as a sort of dowry, or a man whose libido is so huge that he refuses to choose between a mother and daughter. Thus, as the reader can easily predict, Arnold makes his way down to Italy and ultimately rescues Lola.

Drawing on Thomas Mann's work, Keyserling's novellas also include three major figures of mixed Teutonic-Latin heritage. In stereotypically Latin fashion, the half-Italian protagonist Günther von Tarniff of *Beate und Mareile* is preoccupied chiefly with appearances and sensual gratification. Early on, we find him admiring his own handsome Mediterranean physiognomy, which even has a slight tinge of feminine beauty:

Er sah gut aus, er konnte zufrieden sein: die matte Gesichtsfarbe, das schwarze Haar seiner italienischen Mutter, die braunen, blanken Frauenaugen mit den langen Wimpern, die Lippen so rot wie bei Knaben, in denen die Jugend noch wie ein Fieber brennt.<sup>25</sup>

In society, Günther is particularly concerned with dazzling others, even his servants: 'Nichts im Leben war ihm ungemütlicher, als wenn er nicht gefiel' (p. 35). Like all Prussian noblemen, Günther ends up serving in the military but soon enough, his Latin-tinged dandyish nature – be it fragility or sensuality – gets in the way: 'Nach einigen Jahren hieß es, seiner Gesundheit halber müsse er den Dienst verlassen. Andere erzählten, seine Beziehungen zu einer hochstehenden Dame hätten seine Entfernung aus Berlin wünschenswert gemacht' (p. 33). Thus, Günther follows his racial inclinations and, like the young *Tonio Kröger*, spends some time in southern Europe. To be exact, he goes to Athens to train as a diplomat, and it is here, in Greece, that he is able to fully explore all his erotic inclinations to the point of exhaustion. When he returns to Germany some years later, he is the picture of the decadent *Lebenskünstler* and would seem, like Tonio Kröger, to be in need of some Nordic purity:

Günther befand sich gerade in einer Krisis, die bei solchen nervösen, allzu gierigen Lebenstrinkern gegen Ende der zwanziger Jahre einzutreten pflegt. Er war satt. Von jeher hatte er das Weib für die Verschleißerin der wichtigsten Genüsse des Lebens angesehen. Für jede Stimmung das richtige Weib zu finden, erschien ihm als die bedeutsamste Kunst, und urplötzlich war er der Weiber so müde [...]. (p. 34)

Thus, the overly satiated Günther marries his childhood neighbour Beate, who impresses him with her purity, and a year later they move to the estate Kaltin where Günther is determined to lead 'ein glückliches Familienleben [...] nach wohlbewährtem, altadligen Rezept' (ibid.). However, it is not long before Günther's southern sensuality begins to torment him once again – he quickly grows bored with the staid Beate and is increasingly infatuated with Mareile, a free-spirited and stunningly beautiful peasant-woman who was raised with Beate on her estate.

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<sup>25</sup> Eduard von Keyserling, *Beate und Mareile*, p. 30.

The motif continues in Keyserling's later work, in the form of a half-Brazilian, half-German aesthete, Enrico Fanoni of *Nicky*, only here it is Fanoni's father who is Latin, and – having grown up in humid, hypersensual Brazil – Fanoni idealises the cool *Waldeinsamkeit* of his motherland. In *Fürstinnen*, meanwhile, Count Streith's head is turned by a pubescent girl named Britta von Syrman who throws flowers into his window. Untamed and unabashed in her infatuation with the ageing Streith, Britta not surprisingly belongs to the Latin world as well. Her mother, German-born but of Italian heritage, only feels truly at home on the Riviera. As she explains to Streith regarding her daughter: 'Auch in dieser [...] ist viel fremdländisches Blut, und auch bei ihr erklärt sich daraus manches, das nicht sein sollte.'<sup>26</sup>

### **Marie Madeleine and the Ribald Latin Tale**

There was nothing particularly original about the racial aesthetics of *Tonio Kröger*, of *Zwischen den Rassen* or of *Beate und Mareile*, except for the intellect behind them. The rough, ribald tale set in Latin Europe seems to have been something of a convention in turn-of-the-century German popular literature – a sort of latter day *commedia dell'arte* translated into naturalistic prose. Marie Madeleine and her equally forgotten contemporaries Oskar A. H. Schmitz (1873-1931) or Ernst Hardt (1876-1947) chose France, Italy or Spain as settings when they wanted to spin a particularly sensational yarn in which characters act with utter disregard for morality and propriety. Here, Spain seems to represent the ultimate in Latin depravity. Schmitz's *Die Sünde wider den heiligen Geist* (1902), for instance, is a particularly licentious story about a young, Spanish priest, Fray Tomàs, who worships Satan in secret and tricks Teresa, a pious virgin girl of fourteen, to whom he is father confessor, into acts of sexual debauchery. The story climaxes with a scene in which Teresa is driven to a bacchanalian frenzy of naked, erotic dancing in front of Fray Tomàs and his friends, in which, among other things, she displays her sex, tears her hymen and agrees to be Satan's paramour. The story begins with the following line: 'In Spanien gab es einmal ein paar junge Leute, die sich einen wirklichen Spass machen wollten'.<sup>27</sup> In *Der arme Pepe* (1898), meanwhile, the young Ernst Hardt depicts a brutal, Spanish coastal region, in which everyone seems to be involved in smuggling and murder. The eponymous, down-on-his-luck protagonist agrees to help

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 795.

smuggle tobacco into the country, only to find his operation on the verge of failure when the local sheriff shows up on the beach. As it later turns out, the sheriff was in fact part of the smuggling operation, but, in the heat of the moment, the short-tempered Pepe, terrified of failure and ridicule, ends up stabbing him with a long knife, 'wie es in Spanien jeder Mann aus dem Volke trägt'.<sup>28</sup> The murder scene is of particular interest, since the reader is offered a piquant glimpse into the mind of the nefarious Latin man as he is about to carry out a vile and instinctual act:

Ein hässliches Lachen umzuckte seine Lippen: Ob er auch so aufspringen würde mit den Beinen und dann platt auf den Rücken fallen, wie neulich Joachin, als ihn Franzisko stach? – Der war gleich tot. – Es hatte so komisch ausgesehen, wie Joachin mit den Beinen aufsprang und dann mit dem Rücken platt auf den Boden fiel. Er hatte beinahe gelacht darüber – – Ob der Polizeimeister auch so fallen würde? (pp. 76-70)

At this moment, Pepe's curiosity regarding how the sheriff will die fully engrosses him, even becoming visceral: 'Dieser Gedanke beherrschte sein ganzes Gehirn, er fühlte genau die Stelle oben im Kopf, wo er ihn dachte; er vergass fast, warum er den Polizeimeister erstechen wollte' (p. 77). The next day, with fresh blood on his hands, Pepe is in high spirits and – in a town rife with vengeance murders – no one immediately suspects him. As a local fisher says, 'Es wird der Bruder vom Carlo Garcia gewesen sein, den er [der Polizeimeister] neulich hat einstecken lassen' (p. 79). On the way to collecting his share for the smuggling operation (and thus in for a great disappointment), Pepe is positively exuberant and even does a spontaneous imitation of the sheriff's death:

Er steckte seinen Stock in die Erde, stellte sich aufrecht daneben, sprang dann plötzlich in die Höhe, warf die Beine nach vorne und liess sich platt auf den Boden fallen. Hier brach er in ein halb schmerzhaftes Lachen aus, rollte sich übermütig auf dem Erdboden einher, sprang dann wieder auf die Füße, griff nach seinem Stock und ging mit nachdenklichem Gesicht weiter. Bald darauf wiederholte er das Springen und Fallen noch einmal, aber langsam und ernsthaft, gleichsam ausproband. (p. 81)

In *Die Posaune des Gerichts* (1898), meanwhile, Hardt portrays the Spanish as superstitious to the point of folly. The story opens with a church full of Spanish villagers who are in the midst of a sort of masochistic derangement brought on by an uncompromising Jesuit priest:

sie brachen zusammen, und Grausen erfasste sie, entsetzliche Angst. Wie ein Delirium verbreitete es sich, lechzend schnappten sie nach jedem neuen Fluch, wimmernd zuckten sie unter ihm zusammen, und doch durchglüht von der

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<sup>27</sup> Oscar A.H. Schmitz, *Die Sünde wider den heiligen Geist in Haschisch. Erzählungen*, Stuttgart, Axel Juncker, 1903, p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> Ernst Hardt, *Der arme Pepe in Priester des Todes. Dreizehn Novellen*. Berlin: Fischer, 1898, p. 76.



wilden Freude, erniedrigt zu werden, beschimpft und zerschmettert zu werden für jede ihrer menschlichen Empfindungen.<sup>29</sup>

The priest soon makes reference to a local superstition, regarding two statues of trombone-playing angels that guard the entrance to a cigarette factory where the local women work. As legend has it, these angels will blow their trombones when a virgin girl walks past them. The priest concludes: 'Und gehen nicht täglich viele Tausend Weiber Eurer Stadt durch das Thor, und hat ihn schon je einer blasen gehört von Euch? – Sehet, so verworfen seid Ihr!' (p. 143). Franzisko, a young shepherd in the crowd, is so agitated by the speech that he insists that same evening on leading his fiancée Juanita through the gate of the cigarette factory, breaking out in anger and despair when the angels remain inanimate.

In light of such stories it may seem surprising that the young Hardt was actually quite fond of Spain and travelled there extensively in the years 1896-97. But there is no paradox here. Hardt's Spanish stories, no matter how unflattering to the Spanish they may seem to us now, are written with a sort of decadent lavishness that indicates the extent to which Hardt actually revelled in what he perceived as Spanish sensuality and brutality.

Schmitz was also an aficionado of Spain and even wrote an article on Spanish dance.<sup>30</sup> He was fascinated with Mediterranean culture in general; his early poems luxuriate in southern landscapes and southern women. Schmitz went on to write a study titled *Don Juan, Casanova und andere erotische Charaktere* (1906), which touches on racial nuances: 'den Rassenunterschied zwischen dem finster-gewaltigen Don Juan und dem liebenswürdig-kultivierten Casanova.'<sup>31</sup> For both Schmitz and Hardt, the portrayal of Spain is all about escaping Teutonic law and order and letting loose repressed inclinations towards sex, violence and Dionysian revelry.

Marie Madeleine's Latin tales, set in Italy and France, can be regarded as part of the same phenomenon. Such stories tend to ooze sensuality, passion and brutality even more so than her other stories. In particular, Madeleine seems to have had a fascination for the inhabitants of the Italian Riviera, where she often vacationed. She set four short stories, three of considerable length, in the fictional fishing village of San Angelo, which may be based on the village of San Lorenzo, near the tourist-town of Alassio where Madeleine owned a villa. In such stories we find a sort of curious

<sup>29</sup> Ernst Hardt, *Die Posaune des Gerichts* in *Priester des Todes*, p. 142.

<sup>30</sup> Oskar A.H. Schmitz, 'Spanische Tänze' in *Die Woche*, 9 January 1909, pp. 67-71.

exoticism of rural Italy at its least attractive, with stark olive groves, dilapidated old buildings and uncultured, at times uncouth Italian peasants who are nonetheless winsome. For the most part, these stories are populated entirely by Italians. Only on a few occasions does Marie Madeleine provide the reader with a foreign character's impression of the milieu.

In *Maria Fortunata*, for instance, the Berliner Arno Helmstadt is sojourning in San Angelo for health reasons and is at times amused, at times disgusted with the Latin vivacity around him. Watching the fishers on the beach as they haul in and butcher astounding quantities of sea creatures, Helmstadt reflects on the differences between German and Italian fisherman: 'Im Gegensatz zu dem starren Ernst des nordischen Fischers zeigten sie eine lebendige Beweglichkeit aller Gesichtszüge. Auf ihren wetterharten Gesichtern spiegelten sich deutlich alle ihre Empfindungen.'<sup>32</sup> Arno is disgusted, however, when he spots a fisherman kill a fish with his teeth and hide it in his hat in order to steal it (the Italian fishermen have shared assets).

Otherwise, Madeleine presents her San Angelo as an insider, recounting tales of passionate and manipulative Italian peasant families, the members of which are, refreshingly, driven more by Latin ego and instinct than Teutonic sensibility and reflection. In *Der königliche Trank*, for instance, the young peasant Marietta is seduced by the married womaniser Vincenzo, whom she ends up making love to regularly for years, hoping that his sickly wife will soon die. At one point, wild with jealousy after sleeping with him, the sensuous Latin girl cries: 'Stirbt sie denn doch nicht? — — stirbt sie denn immer noch nicht?!'.<sup>33</sup> When Marietta's brother Bartolomeo spies on her and discovers her affair, he beats her up, then arranges with his other siblings and his mother to keep Marietta pent up in the house and under constant surveillance until Vincenzo can finally marry her. After Vincenzo's wife dies and there is still no marriage proposal — but rather, rumours that Vincenzo has taken another lover — Bartolomeo and his brothers stalk Vincenzo and threaten to kill

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<sup>31</sup> Oskar A.H. Schmitz, *Don Juan, Casanova und andere erotischen Charaktere. Ein Versuch*. Stuttgart: Axel Juncker, 1906. p. 9

<sup>32</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Maria Fortunata* in *Der Liebe Regenbogen*, p. 40. This passage could have been inspired by Ferdinand Gregorovius in his 'Idyllen vom Lateinischen Ufer' (1854): 'Der neapolitanische Fischer, so armselig er ist, halbnackt, im aufgeschürzten Beinkleid von Linnen und im bloßen Hemd, die rote Beutelkappe auf dem Kopf, lebendig, beweglich, übersprudelnd von Laune, von Witz und gutmütigen Geschwätz, immer sangesfroh und zu Schwänken augelegt, macht neben unserm stummen und einfältigen baltischen Fischer eine theatrale, ja selbst ideale Figur.' See Ferdinand Gregorovius, *Wanderjahre in Italien: Figuren, Geschichte, Leben und Scenerie aus Italien*, p. 132.

<sup>33</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Der königliche Trank* in *Brennende Liebe*, p. 101.



him if he doesn't marry their sister. Vincenzo agrees to marry her, but he secretly vows to treat her horribly in revenge.

Such archetypal Latin brutality is at its finest in the figure of Carlino, an Italian innkeeper who appears in three of the four San Angelo stories (with a somewhat altered background in the later two). We are first introduced to Carlino in the story *Glück*, where, as a young man, he is 'schön', 'kräftig' and 'brutal'.<sup>34</sup> He marries for money and then dominates his wife into utter submission, treating her as nothing more than a permanent housekeeper while he uses her father's money to get himself started in the world. Later, he is affectionate towards his daughters but only on account of their beauty, which he sees as another potential source of money. When his second daughter suffers a deforming eye injury, Carlino is no longer capable of loving her: 'Es war nicht böser Wille von ihm, – er konnte einfach nicht anders, ihm war dieses verstümmelte Gesicht ebenso peinlich wie ein verstümelter Wertgegenstand' (p. 18). His main concern for his intact older daughter is that she find a rich husband or lover as soon as possible. He encourages her to run off with a French baron – who apparently plans to have her trained as actress – adding only that, 'wenn es ihr gut geht', she shouldn't forget her parents, 'die im Schweiß ihres Angesichts ihr Brot erwürben' (p. 14). At the end of the story, when his deformed, younger daughter is accidentally run over by a car, Carlino is happy with the twenty thousand lira compensation from the culprit and is willing to let the matter rest (p.36). This is the 'Glück' of the story's title, which the self-serving Carlino has had all his life, and it seems that Marie Madeleine, eager to escape German *Anständigkeit*, admires, perhaps even identifies with Carlino just as much as she ironises him.

In *Maria Fortunata*, Carlino reappears in an equally ambiguous light when the German protagonist Arno Herlmstadt comes to stay at his inn. Now older and plumper, 'der dicke Carlino' displays further stereotypically Latin characteristics. Chatty and buoyant, he has a jarring tendency towards prolonged and overly excited discourse, as when he praises his town of San Angelo to the skies:

Ein Kurort, wie Sie keinen zweiten finden werden, Signor! Welch anderer liegt so geschützt, frage ich?!..... Kann sich Mentone damit messen, oder San Remo?... Welch anderer Ort liegt so in der Bucht, von den Bergen wie von Kaminschirmen umgeben? ... Es ist Wahnsinn von den Fremden, daß sie nicht hierherkommen!<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Glück* in *Die heiligsten Güter*, vol. 1, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Maria Fortunata* in *Der Liebe Regenbogen*, p. 35.

By the time Carlino is finished, he is so worked up, ‘daß ihm die Schweißtropfen auf der schöngeformten Stirn perlten, über welcher sich ein Wall grauer Locken malerisch emportürmte’ (p. 36).

One of Carlino’s favourite topics seems to be his fellow countrymen, of whom he is superficially proud – ‘ein Volk von Kultur und Bildung’ – as he vaguely calls them. But he feigns dismay at the purported miserliness of his fellow Italians: ‘wir verstehen es nicht, Geld auszugeben!’ (ibid.). This, of course, is a ploy to get Helmstadt to continue spending money on opulent meals and wine at his inn. One is reminded here of the various chatty and slimy Italians in *Der Tod in Venedig*, who do their utmost to keep Aschenbach in Venice as a money-spending tourist, despite the cholera outbreak.

In *Der Tölpel*, Carlino is given – in an unabashed variation on the scenario of *Glück* – two sons rather than two daughters. The eldest, Giulio, the *Tölpel* of the title, is a bit simple-minded, has a lazy eye and is hence treated mercilessly by Carlino, who favours his manlier and cleverer younger son Gaston. Carlino dominates his wife into submission in this story as well, even hiring a live-in ‘housekeeper’, Tonietta, with whom he seems to be having an affair. His wife continues to do the housework, while Carlino lazes about: ‘Im übrigen tat er nichts, als höchst dekorativ vor seinem Gasthaus herumzustehn. Arbeiten konnte ja seine Frau.’<sup>36</sup> Portrayed here as a sort of handsome plebeian emperor, Carlino would suit the role of a mafia boss in a modern movie: ‘Den Kopf trägt er in den Nacken zurückgeworfen, und unter den kurzen, grauen Locken blickt das Gesicht wie das eines römischen Kaisers. Und ob er auch schmutzig angezogen ist, – eine unnachahmliche Würde liegt über ihm, – eine Würde liegt in jeder seiner Bewegungen’ (p. 118). Carlino is quick to lose his temper, and when this happens, the whole household breaks out into Latin hysteria. At one point, Carlino ‘bekam einen solchen Wutanfall, daß sein Gesicht sich bläulich färbte; seine Frau hielt seinen Zustand für einen Schlagfluß und schrie und schluchzte wie eine Besessene’ (p. 146).

His son Gaston, meanwhile, is portrayed as a classic Latin womaniser who particularly enjoys stealing women away from his hapless older brother. First, they both have a fling with the ‘housekeeper’ Tonietta, one after the other, and then Gaston attempts to bed Giulio’s plucky young wife, which leads the simple-minded older brother to the verge of fratricide.

Similar to her Italian, San Angelo stories, Marie Madeleine also wrote numerous tales that take place wholly in the French world, usually in Paris, and with mainly French characters. Such stories differ from her San Angelo stories only in that the Latin sensuality is less subjected to superstitious, moral restraint and hence more developed and refined. Here the presence of Teutonic elements in the blood of the Northern French and the unhygienic racial condition of the French aristocracy and of the Parisians in general also play a role.

The novella *Die Kleider der Herzogin* (1906), one of Marie Madeleine's best-selling publications, is the most exemplary work in this vein. The protagonist is a young Walloon Belgian duchess, Blanche des Graviers, née Bouringot, who lives in Paris. From the northern limits of the Latin world, she is not stereotypically Latin in appearance – she has 'goldbraun[e] Haare' and 'blaue[e] Kinderaugen'<sup>37</sup> – but psychologically, she is Latin through and through. As a very young woman, she is already prone to a more ingenuous, Latin version of the fatalistic and Epicurean philosophy of the Slavic Sascha Betzkaroff or the Slavic-Latin Olga Flammberg. As Blanche discovers early on: 'Man wird krank und man stirbt. Es ist ja alles egal – –.' (p. 222). As a result, she declares: 'Geniessen – –! Ich will genießen' (ibid.). Married to a young, unexciting husband – a Belgian ambassador, who is described as 'schmächtig und klein' (p. 221) – Blanche soon finds herself in search of erotic adventure. In particular, she seems to have a penchant for German men; her first post-marital interest is an ageing Prussian officer of noble bearing, who ends up rejecting her advances out of discretion. Her first lover will ultimately be a younger and worldlier German by the name of Herr von Urach-Sterndorf, who is in the service of a decadent Russian ambassador.

At times, the highly sensual Blanche strongly resembles Madeleine's Russian *femmes fatales*, as when she dances at her first ball:

Eine wilde, tierische Elektrizität ging von ihr aus, die ihren Tänzern den Atem raubte, und ihre Herzen schneller schlagen ließ.  
Alle diese Männer fühlten unbewußt die brennende Genußsucht dieser Frau, die Sinnlichkeit, die sich in ihrer Schönheit aussprach, in jeder ihrer Gebärden [...] (p. 228)

At one point, Blanche also falls for another stately, elderly man (this time a Frenchman) and makes advances at him, only to reject him in disgust when she discovers how helplessly he longs for her as well (p. 232). This would seem to

<sup>36</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Der Töpel* in *Der Liebe Regenbogen*, p. 120.

<sup>37</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die Kleider der Herzogin* in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 1, p. 220.

parallel the cruelty of Madeleine's Russian *femme fatale*, yet it is wholly without the prowess and intention that characterises the latter's actions. Like other Latin women in turn-of-the-century literature, Blanche is devoid of intellect and armed merely with her Latin sense of fashion and appearances – the narrator describes her as a 'raffiniertes Modepüppchen' (p. 240) – as she haplessly follows her sensual inclinations. She even falls victim to the schemes of her falsely ingratiating doctor, the most popular physician among women of her circle, who is secretly keeping a record of his patients' erotic impulses for a book titled *Die Entartung der Frau* (p. 230). All in all, Blanche radiates less fantasy, less oblivion and less psychological brutality than a Russian *femme fatale*.

In a purely physical sense, however, Blanche is quite brutal. On a whim, she extinguishes a cigarette on her future lover's hand, the act of which seems to unleash intense sensual pleasure in her body: 'Die Herzogin drehte die Zigarette langsam in der Wunde herum, und ihre feinen Nasenflügel gerieten dabei in zuckende Bewegung' (p. 236). Later, this same nasal gesture befalls the duchess when she makes love to her German plaything – after he has injured himself in a riding accident. Here the scent of his blood welling up through the bandages unleashes a vampiric passion inside her:

Unter dem Verband auf seiner Brust sickerte in schweren, klebrigen Tropfen dunkles Blut hervor. Die Nasenflügel der Herzogin weiteten sich, als der bittere Geruch des Blutes zu ihr aufstieg. Eine Raserei erfaßte sie. Sie grub ihre blanken Zähne in seinen Mund, und in ihr tobte es: 'ach, dich austrinken, Liebster, dich erschöpfen, – – deine Kraft nehmen, all deine – – Kraft – –' (p. 245)

This frivolous, Walloon vampire has little understanding for her German paramour's soulful love for his fiancée. Since the latter is not pretty, Blanche regards the German's feelings as a particular affront and is quick to destroy his treasured photograph of the homely, presumably German woman (p. 239). We have already seen, in the work of the brothers Mann, that soul and depth of character were not traits associated with the Latin race. But Blanche's love for Herr von Urach-Sterndorf, however sensual and unwholesome, is still of a very serious nature. Soon after he departs Franch, Blanche, aged twenty-two, dies of pneumonia after a night of frantic dancing, which was followed by an early morning coach-ride. Despite her husband's protests, she was wearing only a silk jacket (p. 250). Thus, it seems that the Frenchwoman's physical passion for Urach-Sterndorf was a matter of life and death. A Russian *femme fatale* would have simply moved on to her next victim.

### The Nuances of the Latin Race

Theodor Fontane, the descendent of Huguenots, wrote of the two racial strains in his French background, of ‘zwei grundverschiedene[n] Volksstämme’<sup>38</sup> whose appearance and persona were apparent even in his parents. His father, as ‘ein großer, stattlicher Gascogner voll Bonhomie’ (ibid.), represented, so it would seem, a Teutonic strain (the history aficionado Fontane was surely aware that the Gascons, or ‘Wasgens’ were originally a Teutonic tribe) whereas his mother, ‘ein Kind der südlichen Cevennen’ (ibid.) was the incarnation of a Latin strain:

eine schlanke, zierliche Frau von schwarzem Haar, mit Augen wie Kohlen, energisch, selbstsuchtslos und ganz Charakter, aber [...] von so großer Leidenschaftlichkeit, daß mein Vater halb ernst-, halb scherzhaft von ihr zu sagen liebte: ‘Wäre sie im Lande geblieben, so tobten die Cevennenkriege noch.’ (ibid.)

Marie Madeleine’s portrayal of the French is characterised by a similar opposition between the Northern French, in particular, the Parisians, and the Italians and Southern French (who are portrayed as essentially Italians). As we have seen, in *Das Sündenkind*, Madeleine conceives of the Parisians as decidedly non-Teutonic. However, in two other short stories – *Glück* and *Dichterliebe* – she also portrays the Parisians as decidedly non-Latin as well. As is the case in Madeleine’s portrayals of Teutonic, class inbreeding, the degeneracy of the Parisian race seems to lie not so much in its ethnic-racial background as in its un-Darwinian mating dynamics. We recall that in *Das Sündenkind*, the unattractiveness and feebleness of the Parisians is the result of too many marriages of convenience and not enough marriages of love, in which healthy natural selection would take place. As it happens, the degenerate appearance of the Parisian – in particular, of the Parisian woman – is a topos throughout Madeleine’s work. In the short story *Die richtige Behandlung*, for instance, the women in a Parisian cabaret are described as follows: ‘meist mit schlechtem Teint, viele lange, spitze Nasen, – dazu oft ein raubvogelartiger, häßlicher Ausdruck in den Gesichtszügen [...]’<sup>39</sup> Here, Madeleine draws ironic attention to the contrast between the legend of Parisian female beauty and the reality of their appearance, the ‘zerknitterten, ermüdeten, gelben Pariser Gesichter’ (p. 277). In *Mutterliebe*, from the same short story collection, Madeleine describes the Parisian

<sup>38</sup> Theodor Fontane, *Meine Kinderjahre in Aufsätze, Kritiken, Erinnerungen (Autobiographisches 4)*. Munich: Hanser, 1973, p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die richtige Behandlung* in *Die Stelle, wo sie sterblich sind...*, p. 276.



woman's talent at covering up her blemishes: 'die spezifisch pariserische Kunst, aus einer mit Reizen mäßig bedachten Frau eine Pariser Schönheit herzustellen – d.h. eine Schönheit, die nur in Paris als solche gilt!'.<sup>40</sup> The degenerate title figure – a mother who refuses to grow old and give up her erotic adventures – is the ultimate example of this artificial, Parisian beauty:

Sie hatte alles, was man für ein Musterexemplar dieser Gattung braucht: einen mit den besten Schminken hergestellten Teint von Lilien und Rosen, – eine in den raffiniertesten Mahagoni-Reflexen leuchtende, vom Coiffeur bezogene Lockenfülle, – den beliebten 'dämonischen Glanz' in den Augen, der einem Tropfen Atropin seine Entstehung dankte, – eine Taille, der durch ein besonders sinnreiches, aus Kautschuk konstruiertes – Korsett jugendliche Schlankheit verliehen wurde, – – und berauschende Dessous und wunderschöne Hüte und wunderschöne Kleider, das Ganze getaucht in ein Meer von aufdringlich schwerem Parfüm, – – außerdem 'esprit' – sie kannte ihren Paul Bourget auswendig – kurz die Pariser Schönheit! Das ist ein Lebensberuf. Und keiner von den leichten. (p. 281)

Of particular interest is the mother's use of the writings of Paul Bourget – the founding theorist of French decadence – to cultivate an artificial intellectual appeal that fits with her artificial, physical appeal.

The motif also continues in Marie Madeleine's work from 1920s, as in *Das Brandmal*, in which the winsome but artificial Parisian Nini is described as follows:

Sie war aber auch ein süßes Ding, fein gedrechselt wie ein Figürchen, das man in eine Vitrine stellt. Hände und Füße von der vornehmen Bildung der latinischen, alten Kulturrasse. Schlanke Beine und starre Knospenbrüstchen. Die Augen, die langgeschnittenen, veilchenfarbenen Augen, waren schwarz untermalt. Das blond ihrer Haare war viel schöner, als die Natur es hervorbringen kann; irgendwelche raffinierten Färbe- oder Bleichmittel hatten diese metallischen Goldreflexe hervorgebracht. Ihr volles Mündchen war feuerrot geschminkt, leuchtete förmlich von dem brennenden Rot, welches die Fliegenpilze schmückt; weißer Puder erhöhte die Zartheit des Gesichts. Sie war eine echte und rechte Pariserin, ein Gemisch von natürlichen und künstlichen Reizen, voll wahrer Grazie und graziöser Affektiertheit.<sup>41</sup>

Such descriptions of Parisian artificiality, of the adroit transformation of degeneration into beauty, echo Nietzsche's conception of France's talent of turning the 'verhängnisvollen Wendungen seines Geistes ins Reizende und Verführerische'.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the phrase 'latinischen, alten Kulturrasse' could be lifted straight out of a text by Nietzsche. But in the work of both Nietzsche and Madeleine, the problem seems to be not so much the Latin race of the Parisian but the poor state that this racial stock is in. Though it is unclear to what extent he felt this was based on degeneration,

<sup>40</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Mutterliebe in Die Stelle, wo sie sterblich sind...*, p. 281.

<sup>41</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Das Brandmal in Glimmende Liebesglut*, pp. 44-5.

<sup>42</sup> Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse in Werke in drei Bänden*, vol. 2, p. 671.



Friedenthal also considered the Parisian woman to constitute 'einen besonderen Typus des Franzosentums'.<sup>43</sup> He cites the French author Pierre de Coulevain, who claims that the Parisian woman 'ihrer Rolle, wie gering sie sei, ein Relief zu geben verstehe. Hat sie kein Temperament, so schafft sie sich eins, ist sie häßlich, weiß sie sich schön zu machen' (ibid.).

In the short stories *Glück* and *Dichterliebe*, Madeleine sets the degenerate Parisian in opposition to the glistening racial hygiene of the dark, indigenous inhabitants of the French and Italian Riviera. In *Glück*, the destiny of Carlino's hearty and beautiful daughter Marietta – to delight degenerate Parisian men – is apparent early on. She is discovered by a blasé Parisian baron, who looks like 'ein ältlicher Pariser Bankier',<sup>44</sup> when he takes a drive through the Italian Riviera – the natural beauty of which fails to impress him. As he remarks to himself: 'Ganz nett, die Riviera, aber immer doch dasselbe: ein blauer Himmel, ein blaueres Meer - Ölbäume und Weinstöcke' (p. 13). But when he takes notice of Marietta, it is exactly her natural sort of beauty that strikes him: 'die fand er garnicht langweilig und garnicht "immer dasselbe", o nein, die war sehr anders als seine Pariser Freundinnen' (ibid.). Carlino, intent on pairing Marietta with just such a rich man, offers the baron 'mit Würde und Feierlichkeit', one of his best wines, 'eine Flasche vom Besten', which he praises as: 'Unverfälschte Natur, -- voll und aromatisch, -- jung und schon feurig --' (ibid.). In doing so, he regards his daughter, 'halb frech, halb scheu', just in case it isn't already clear whose qualities he is truly praising. The next morning, the French baron drives back to Paris with Marietta in tow.

Six years later, Marietta is enjoying success and wealth as a Parisian courtesan and figurehead. The French baron, after whom Marietta enjoyed a series of other benefactors, has been congratulated on his 'Entdeckung' (p. 19). Marietta delights Paris with her natural, lush beauty, which seems to have all but died out in the French capital: 'Das war doch mal was anderes als die Pariser Zierpüppchen, dieses große, starke Mädels, das so üppig blühte in strahlender Jugend' (ibid.). Her manner is unrefined, yet something dignified and cultivated seems to flow in her blood:

Und sie war so entzückend unzivilisiert, die schöne Marietta – es machte ihr solche Schwierigkeiten, ihren Namen zu schreiben, daß sie ein Kreuz hinzeichnete wie ein alter Bauer!

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<sup>43</sup> Friedenthal, *Das Weib im Leben der Völker*, vol. 2, p. 552.

<sup>44</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Glück* in *Die heiligsten Güter*, vol. 1, p. 12.

Bei alledem hatte sie eine Unbekümmertheit, wie sie nur die ganz großen Damen haben. War es das Bewußtsein ihrer Schönheit, – – war es die Kultur ihres klassischen Heimatboden, die unbewußt in ihrem Blute lag? (ibid.) Indeed, Marietta has her father's wit – the stereotypical, animal craftiness of the Italian peasant and the Latin race as a whole. The Parisians are impressed by her 'beißende[m] Witz' and her 'zündende[r] Schlagfertigkeit' (p. 20). She is 'selbstbewußt glücklich' in her 'prachtvollen, animalischen Weiblichkeit' (ibid.). For her degenerate, Parisian lovers, she is like a treatment at a Mediterranean spa: 'Für die blasierten Nerven der Pariser Lebemänner hatte Marietta etwas von der aufreizenden Kraft der salzigen Meeresluft, in der sie zum Weibe gereift' (p. 23).

Towards the end of the story, Marietta travels with her latest Parisian benefactor, a portly car manufacturer named Herr Pateau, to the French Riviera. They are accompanied by a French aristocrat and his own courtesan, Joujou – a *femme fragile* of stereotypically Parisian, degenerate beauty. It is clear that Madeleine has specially fabricated this scenario so that she can contrast the two types of *Rassenschönheit*. As the narrator soon explains: 'Der Gegensatz zwischen den beiden Frauen war gerade so scharf.' Joujou, on the one hand, is the ultimate exemplar of decadent, sickly beauty:

Joujou war nicht eigentlich hübsch: ein kleines, zartes Püppchen, ein blasses Gesicht, doppelt blaß unter der weißen Puderschicht, – ihr größter Reiz waren wohl ihre Augen, die leidenschaftlichen wilddunklen Augen mit den riesigen Pupillen. Sie hatte den neuropatischen Blick, den so viele verführerisch finden. Alles was an ihr reizvoll war, war krankhaft: der schmale, durchsichtig blasse Nacken, die schwarzen Schatten unter ihren Augen, – die schlangenhafte Grazie ihres Figürchens. (pp. 21-22)

In contrast, Marietta is the picture of healthy, female splendour:

Die sechs Jahre Paris hatten nicht vermocht, ihr ihre Frische zu rauben. Noch war auf ihren Wangen das warme Sammetkolorit das sie als halbwüchsiges Mädchen gehabt. Nur ihr Mund war röter geworden, – er war ja soviel geküßt worden seitdem.

Ihre schweren dunklen Haare umbauschten in mächtigen Wellen ihr Gesicht. Auch in ihren Haaren war die üppige Kraft, die über ihrem ganzen Sein lag. Man fühlte, diese Haare mußten Funken sprühen, wenn sie sie kämmte. Ihr Wesen war so ungezügelt wie ihre Schönheit. (pp. 22-23)

Joujou for her part is horribly jealous of Marietta, who knows nothing of the trials and tribulations of a *femme fragile*:

Ja, sie haßte sie, die immer schön war.... immer gesund.... immer blühend, – – die nicht wußte von Nächten, wo man vor Brustschmerzen kaum atmen konnte [...] Sie haßte sie, der das Lächeln so leicht war wie ein süßes Spiel, – die nichts davon wußte, daß das Lächeln oft eine schwerere Arbeit war als Steinklopfen.....' (p. 25)

The febrile Joujou attempts to rile the buxom Italian woman by mocking her modest background, but to no avail – Marietta is proud of her heritage and has never tried to deny it. It is part of her appeal. Determined to show the Parisians just how nice her hometown is, the vainglorious Marietta has them drive across the border into Italian Liguria. The change in landscape from the artificial gardens of the French Riviera to the rustic Ligurian countryside models the racial difference between Joujou and Marietta: ‘Statt der blühenden Ziersträucher, statt der importierten Tropengewächse ragten knorrige Olivenstämme mit silberschimmerndem Laub [...] Die Berge ragten zerklüftet in ungebändigtem Trotz’ (pp. 28-29). But the degenerate French find this landscape ‘langweilig’ (p. 29). That Madeleine herself was not too pretentious to prefer the more feral beauty of Liguria is evident in that fact that she owned a vacation house there, rather than on the French Riviera.

The brief short story *Dichterliebe* offers a synopsis of the same French-Italic opposition. It recounts a major turning point in the life of Octave Denis, a fictional Parisian poet who becomes a national hero when his writing finds mass appeal. As a young man, Octave is a member of ‘der roten Lilie’, a group of adolescent poets with uncompromisingly decadent aesthetics: ‘Sie wollten die überreizt zitternden Nerven der modernen Menschheit besingen und die seltsamen Verirrungen ihrer Triebe’.<sup>45</sup> Their interests are typically *fin-de-siècle*, ranging from colour theory and dark eroticism to Satanism. The youngest member, Nini, is not a poet at all but a fourteen-year-old girl, whom the poets have elected as their muse, ‘weil sie rote Haare von einer gar nicht wiederzuerfindenden Nuance besaß und in ungeheuerlichen Quantitäten Äther soff’ (p.182).

Octave’s young life as a morose aesthete is forever changed during a stay at his elder sister’s manor on the Riviera. There he falls in love with Maria, the young nursemaid of his sister’s children, ‘ein hübsches, kräftiges Mädchen von rein italienschem Typus’ (p. 189). As Madeleine gleefully remarks: ‘Die Natürlichkeit, die er verachtet und verschmäht, kam zu ihm wie eine schöne Frau’ (p. 190). After a few months of earthy, sensual bliss in the arms of the Provençale Maria, a cheerful Octave returns to Paris with life-affirming and decidedly un-decadent poems in tow. He is banished from ‘der roten Lilie’ but launched to fame as soon as the new poems are published. Only the first two lines of the most beloved poem are ever revealed to the reader: ‘Von einem jungen Mädchen will ich singen, \ Das schön ist wie ihr

heißes Land...' (p. 192). Thus Madeleine's writing once again echoes Nietzsche, who spoke of the regenerative Provençal and Ligurian blood, which protects the French from northern, intellectual fog.

The story closes as an ageing Octave, now the patriarch of modern, French literature, recites this poem to an adoring crowd. In the audience is Maria, now a penniless and unsightly old woman, who has chanced upon the poetry recital and recognised the name of her lover from long ago. Unbeknownst to Octave, Maria had borne him a child and moved to Paris to find work, where the child soon died. As the last lines of Octave's poem resound, Maria lets out a tormented cry, which is drowned out by applause.

In the portrayal of Maria as an old woman, Madeleine's writing takes a rare feminist turn, indicating the inhumanity of treating woman as a muse. That Madeleine, however, was herself not averse to portraying Latin men as racial muses is apparent in a later work, in which she espouses the Mediterranean *Rassenschönheit* of a minor character named Léon:

Dieser Léon war so ein echter Sohn der italienisch-französischen Küste. Auf dem athletenhaften Jünglingskörper ein Kopf von klassischer Schönheit. Königlich stolz der Nacken, – die leidenschaftlichen Augen von einem tiefen Goldbraun, umsäumt von einem Strahlenkranz tiefschwarzer Wimpern.<sup>45</sup>

In Madeleine's glorification of pure Mediterranean beauty at the expense of the artificial, half-Teutonic synthesis of the Parisian, she was also – consciously or unconsciously – tapping into the sort of racial discourse that may have been typical of France at the time. While chauvinist Germans were concerned that Teutonic beauty was being undermined by increasing levels of non-Aryan blood, it seems that some French regarded the Teutons as unseemly beasts who had corrupted Mediterranean beauty. In the Frenchman Paul Gsell's collected conversations with the sculptor Rodin, published in 1912, Gsell postulates that women of the modern world cannot match the beauty of the women of the classical world. Rodin, however, claims that such beauty is alive and well 'hauptsächlich unter den Europäerinnen des Südens',<sup>46</sup> to which Gsell asks: 'Aber haben denn nicht die Einfälle der Barbaren in das römische Reich durch Kreuzungen die antike Schönheit verdorben?' (p. 163).

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<sup>45</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Dichterliebe* in *Der Liebe Regenbogen*, p. 183.

<sup>46</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Die Verräterin* in *Glimmende Liebesglut*, p. 75.

<sup>47</sup> Auguste Rodin, *Die Kunst. Gespräche des Meisters gesammelt von Paul Gsell*. Leipzig: Rowohlt, 1912, p. 162.

Rodin accepts Gsell's hypothesis as a possibility, but maintains that things have levelled out since then:

Angenommen [...], daß die Barbaren minder schön, minder ebenmäßig gebaut gewesen wären als die Mittelmeer-Rassen, was wohl möglich ist, so hat die Zeit es übernommen, die durch die Blutmischungen erzeugten Fehler zu tilgen und die Harmonie des alten Typus wieder hervortreten zu lassen. (ibid.) Still, Rodin proves himself to be less biased regarding racial beauty than the likes of Stratz. Ultimately he says: 'Offen gestanden, alle menschliche Typen, alle Rassen haben ihre Schönheit. Man muß sie nur finden' (p. 164). In a sense, this is what Marie Madeleine portrays throughout her work, except that she is not averse to portraying both the ugliness and the beauty of every race, and sometimes the ugliness can be just as alluring as the beauty.

In the story *Madame Genie* (1910), for instance, the naturalness of Italian beauty, so romanticised in her other works, is portrayed in a more ambiguous light. Here a filthy and lazy Italian girl becomes an emblem for Madeleine's recurring theme of the triumph of the flesh over all moral and even aesthetic considerations. The story presents an ageing, bourgeois French couple, the Graniers, who maintain a villa in Italian Liguria, which they rent out to tourists. One summer, some English ladies employ a local Italian girl, the fifteen-year old Rosina, for housework, primarily because she is so typically Italian: 'Schön war die hagere, hochaufgeschossene Rosina nicht, – das behaupteten nicht einmal die Misses, aber dafür fanden sie "so echt italienisch" mit ihren dunklen, scharfblickenden Augen, ihrem pfefferkuchenbraunem Teint'.<sup>48</sup> The English ladies, who are amateur painters, are quite lenient towards Rosina's uncleanness and her shortcomings as a servant, as these are all part of her Italian character: 'Und "echt italienisch" fanden sie auch den Schmutz, der an Rosinas Kleidern klebte. [...] So waren denn die guten Malerinnen auch der grenzenlosen Faulheit des Mädchens gegenüber recht nachsichtig, – "eben eine italienische Charaktereigenschaft"' (p. 21).

Unfortunately, the Graniers have little of the English ladies' tolerance for the chaotic and dirty atmosphere of the Mediterranean, which is so well represented by Rosina. Madame prides herself on being a sophisticated Parisian and Monsieur prides himself on being a hard-working French bourgeois. They are in Italy solely to make money. Monsieur Granier regards the English ladies's racial pet as an 'italienische Dreckjöhre' or even 'das schmutzigste, faulste Luder, das ich je gesehen habe' (p. 22).

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<sup>48</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Madame Genie* in *Aber das Fleisch ist stark!*, p. 21.

Indeed, the pubescent Rosina does not do anything useful, and Madeleine's description of her daily life and habits is perhaps one of the more bizarre, German portrayals of the Latin woman as almost enviable in her artless and undemanding *joie de vivre*. Like an animal, Rosina spends most of her day casually rummaging for food and crudely grooming herself. She wanders around the garden stealing oranges and lemons from the trees and otherwise she eats only macaroni, contemptuously rejecting all the nice French cuisine that Madame Granier prepares for her lodgers. Rosina's only 'Tätigkeit' is to prepare her macaroni and this activity has a somnambulant, almost zen-like quality about it:

In eine der lochartigen Vertiefungen des primitiven Herdes legte sie ein paar Stückchen Holzkohle, die sie anzündete. Dann bewegte sie einen Fächer aus Stroh hin und her, um die Glut zu schüren. Das tat sie mit langsamen Handbewegungen, mit stumpfsinnigem Gesichtsausdruck, – halb wie im Schläfe.

Manchmal fingen die Kohlen Feuer, dann wurden in einen Topf Maccaroni und Wasser getan und das stundenlang geschmort. (p. 23)

But sometimes, the fire doesn't start at all, and then: 'gab sie das Mittagessen ganz auf und fraß Palmenfrüchte' (ibid.). The word 'fressen' is used here, further emphasising Rosina's animal peculiarities. Meanwhile, though she dresses in rags, Rosina does make an effort to groom herself. At one point, Madame Granier discovers Rosina in her chamber half-naked, carelessly combing her hair, even ripping out bundles of it. As Rosina nonchalantly declares to the horrified Madame Granier: 'ich habe doch soviel Haar, und was ich ausreiße wächst wieder nach' (p. 24). In the concluding scene of the story, an angry Monsieur Granier discovers the steadily more pubescent Rosina plucking roses in his garden, which, as she haplessly chirps, she just wanted to stick in her hair. Granier exclaims: 'Ach, du bist verrückt; Rosen ins Haar! Renne lieber nicht so zerlumpt rum, daß es einen ekelt, wenn man dich ansieht. Warum nähst du dir denn nichts, du unordentliche Kröte?! Da, sieh dir mal das an – –' (p. 28). Contemptuously, Granier grips her shoulder, where her blouse hangs in shreds. This causes the material to tear even further, revealing the upper part of Rosina's chest, 'die sich in knospenhafter Schwellung wölbte.' Here, in a typical Marie Madeleine ending, the correct Monsieur Granier falls victim to his own Latin, animal inclinations, grips Rosina's breasts and kisses her (p. 28). His wife happens to be looking on from a nearby window and all at once, her delusions of her husband's undying love, which are intertwined with her fantasies of bourgeois order and Parisian sophistication, are shattered.



### The Inbred Latin Aristocrat

Marie Madeleine's writing also offers some Latin versions of the inbred aristocrat, who share many attributes with the Teutonic, inbred aristocrats – but perhaps on account of the Latin admixture, such attributes are taken to further extremes. Early on, Marie Madeleine depicts such a figure in the short story *Aus faulem Holz* (1902) from the collection of the same name. The protagonist, Ulrich, is a young, aristocratic Frenchman living in Paris, whose Teutonic first name and Teutonic, light blond hair would seem to confirm Sieyès' and Gobineau's conception of the French aristocracy as Frankish. Yet Latin admixture and family inbreeding seems to have altered his family's character since the heroic days of Clovis and Charlemagne. In what is another rendition on the motif initiated by Huysmans' *À rebours*, Ulrich's inbred appearance and persona and his decadent family history are lucidly documented:

Man sah ihm immerhin seine zweiundzwanzig Jahre an, trotz der blasierter heruntergezogenen Mundwinkel und der fahlen Blässe seines Gesichts, in dem sich das naïve Blau seiner Augen so merkwürdig ausnahm. Er hatte einen zu hoch aufgeschossenen und zu schlanken Körper, und deshalb ging er immer ein wenig vornübergebeugt und hielt den Kopf gesenkt wie eine Treibhauspflanze, erblüht in einer feuchten und heißen Luft. Eine überreife Race war in ihm, in diesem Letzten eines uralten Geschlechts, das degeneriert war durch auf Familienpolitik gegründete Verwandtschaftsheiraten.

Seit dem ersten Tage seines Lebens trug er wie eine Dornenkrone den Fluch der Krankheit.

Er war ein so schwaches Kind. Seine Augen blickten immer sehr ernst, fast vorwurfsvoll und sein hochgeschwungener, blasser Mund lächelte selten. 'Was für ein hübscher Junge,' sagten die Leute, wenn er an der Seite seines Hauslehrers spazieren ging mit seinen langen, hellblonden, auf die Schultern fallenden und in die Stirn gekämmten Pagenhaaren.

Ein bißchen gleichgültig war er immer, ein bißchen müde –<sup>49</sup>

But despite his indifference and fatigue, Ulrich, like Prinz Christian, also has a wild, thrill-seeking side that his inbred constitution does not support: 'Aber er liebte leidenschaftlich wilde Spiele, die seinen zarten Körper erschöpften' (ibid.). In this way, Ulrich is similar to his prematurely deceased mother, who used to spend all day lying in bed and all night dancing. In the following description, she seems to combine the nervousness and sickliness that comes with inbreeding with the ingenuous sensuality associated with Latinness:

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<sup>49</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Aus faulem Holze* in *Aus faulem Holze in Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 2, p. 225.

Sie tanzte mit unheimlicher Leidenschaft, den Kopf mit den mächtigen, blonden Haarwellen in den Nacken geworfen, und die Lippen geöffnet, wie um die frivol-zärtlichen Walzermelodien zu trinken, die durch den Saal zitterten. Ihr ganzes Wesen war dann wie aufgelöst in Genuß, während scharf umgrenztes Rot ihre Wangen färbte, und ein trübes, heißes Licht aufglommte in ihren blauen Augen, die von breiten, dunklen Ringen umgeben waren. (ibid.)  
Like the inbred Prinz Christian, the handsome Ulrich is a hit among the

women: 'Seine müde, blonde Jugend machte die Weiber toll, und seine vornehme Gleichgültigkeit imponierte ihnen gewaltig.' (ibid.). A lover of his father even says: 'So hübsch ist er... und so zart... wie ein verkleidetes Mädchen sieht er aus!' (ibid.). Ulrich ends up having lots of liaisons, but remains polite and indifferent to all women. One is a 'Dame der Gesellschaft' (p. 226) – the mother of one of his friends – another is a proletarian, a cabaret dancer, whose Gallo-Roman origins would seem to be betrayed by her pretty, Mediterranean physiognomy: 'Ihre prachtvollen, braunen Haare umgaben in großen Wellen ihr schmales Gesicht mit den melancholisch dunklen Augen' (ibid.). It is not until Ulrich ends up sleeping with Nini, a woman of the lowest proletariat, that his sexual passion is awakened for the first time. With her dark hair, brown arms, red, moist lips and strength and lushness, Nini embodies for Ulrich life itself. He loves her 'in Sünden und in Qualen' (p. 227). Of course, this is not good for his inbred constitution: 'Er lebte in einer beständigen Aufregung, die seine schwache Gesundheit immer mehr untergrub. Seine Augen brannten wie Flammen in seinem blassen und magern Gesicht, und seine Lippen waren immer halb geöffnet, als ob sie Durst hätten.' (ibid.) Ominously, the narrator reminds the reader of Ulrich's deceased mother, who had died one evening on the ballroom floor, in the arms of one of her admirers (p. 225).

Ulrich's love for Nini is of a purely sexual nature. It is based on a lust for her luscious, proletarian, Gallo-Roman body – a body that fits all too awkwardly into the elegant clothes that Ulrich buys for her. The narrator evokes Ulrich's thoughts as he regards her all dressed up:

Wie maskiert sieht sie aus [...] ach du, die Seide möchte ich von deinem Körper reißen, daß du du selbst bist in deiner prachtvollen Tierheit!  
Ich möchte die goldenen Nadeln aus deiner hohen Frisur ziehen, daß deine braunen Haare wie ein wirres Gewoge herunterfluten auf deine bacchantische Nacktheit. (p. 227)

But just as Nini's proletarian body excites him, her proletarian chatter disgusts him. He even has a violent fantasy about cutting off Nini's tongue and watching all the healthy blood spill out onto her Gallo-Roman body: 'Und er dachte an das Blut, das

dann ihren Mund füllen würde und herunterstürzen wie ein heißer Strom. Das tiefe, tiefe Purpurrot auf der hellen Bronze ihrer Haut –' (ibid.).

After a few months, Nini leaves Ulrich for her proletarian ex-lover Gaston. The narrator remarks: 'Aus seinem goldenen Käfig flatterte der kleine Sumpfvogel wieder zurück in den Schmutz.' (p. 228) Thus, Nini becomes another pre-Aryan 'Sumpfhexe' who dispassionately conquers a blond nobleman. One day, after Ulrich sees Nini from his carriage with Gaston, 'diese[m] Kerl mit dem Stiernacken und dem Stempel der Gemeinheit auf dem roten Gesicht' (ibid.), he falls into despair. He is jealous of the two proletarians, enraged at his own inbred infirmity and resentful towards his parents for having conceived him:

Wie grenzenlos er die beiden beneidete um ihre rohe Lebenskraft, die blühen will [...] die nicht fragt nach den welken Trieben am Baume des Lebens, aus faulem Holze entstanden und der Vernichtung geweiht, bevor sie Blüten getragen. [...] Warum mußte er büßen für fremde Schuld, für die Heirat eines hysterischen Weibes mit einem ungeliebten, greisenhaften Zyniker? Warum mußte sein Körper so schwach sein, und seine Seele so ohne Widerstand, daß die erste Leidenschaft seines Lebens ihn fortriß wie der Sturm ein welkes Blatt! Was sollte er, der krank war bis ins Mark, und der doch nichts liebte als die Kraft, die heilige Kraft! (p. 229)

In answer to this last thought, Ulrich shoots himself.

Another inbred Latin aristocrat, the Italian Marquis Marco Pali, also recurs in Madeleine's San Angelo stories as a sort of decadent counterpart to Carlino. The Palis are an Italian aristocratic family in the final stages of decay, and in *Maria Fortunata*, Carlino relates their Huysmansian, decadent family history to Arno Helmstadt. Once a strong and potent tribe that lived and died hard, the Palis are now down to one last, febrile man:

Seit undenklichen Zeiten sei die Familie hier im Lande, – in der Chronik von San Angelo, welche im Rathaus einzusehen sei, stehe das alles ganz genau verzeichnet. Wahrhaft Herren seien die Palis gewesen – wilde, starke Herren, die weder mit ihrem Blut noch Gold gespart haben, – die zu leben verstanden hatten und zu sterben! Aber im Laufe der Jahrhunderte war ihr blühender Stammbaum verdorrt. Hörte es sich nicht wie ein Hohn auf die jetzige Generation an, daß im siebzehnten Jahrhundert der Marchese Lorenzo zwölf Söhne gehabt hatte, zwölf starke Söhne, berühmt in Schlacht und Sieg? Der jetzige Marchese war der Letzte, – des stolzen Baumes letztes, kümmerliches Reis.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Maria Fortunata* in *Der Liebe Regenbogen*, p. 45.

In *Der königliche Trank*, specific information is given about Marco Pali's more active father and grandfather: 'Noch sein Vater war ein ganz anderer Kerl gewesen, und erst sein Großvater, der alte Marchese, der fünfundneunzig Jahre alt geworden war! Der hatte trinken gekonnt wie keiner und kein hübsches Mädels hatte er in Ruhe gelassen'.<sup>51</sup> As a result of the grandfather's potency, many peasants in the region have Pali features, uncorrupted through excessive inbreeding: 'im Land liefen ein halbes Dutzend Leute herum, die den Palis ganz anders ähnlich sahen, als der kümmerliche Marco' (ibid.).

Like Ulrich's family, the Palis may be partially Teutonic themselves. In *Maria Fortunata* the marquis' mother is described as 'die stolze, rotblonde Maria-Laetitia',<sup>52</sup> and, in *Der königliche Trank*, one of the peasant descendants of Pali's grandfather is a redhead. But Maria-Laetitia was a cousin of her late husband, and she herself was the product of a *Verwandtenehe* (p. 46). Once beautiful and buxom, she is now emaciated, bed-ridden and out of her senses. At twenty, she was already 'geistesverwirrt'. Her son Marco, meanwhile, is the picture of decay and infertility: 'ein schwächlicher etwa vierzigjähriger Mann mit einem Klemmer vor den kurzsichtigen Augen. Ein ausgefranster Kinnbart umrahmte sein Gesicht [...]' (pp. 43). Signs of a nervous ailment are also immediately apparent: 'Er konnte seine Glieder nicht einen Augenblick stillhalten, warf sie in wunderlichen Verzerrungen durcheinander' (p. 43-44). At one point, his gait is described as more of a hop: 'Don Marco hüpfte, wie immer mit sonderbaren Gliederverrenkungen' (p. 72). Marco's eyes, however, are grey in colour (p. 83), hinting, perhaps, at the last vestiges of Teutonic heritage, however diluted and corrupted through early Latin admixture and later family inbreeding. Even the jumbled, unaesthetic castle in which the Palis live appears to be symbolic of their racial mixture:

Es bildete ein stilloses Gemisch. Man sah sofort, daß die einzelnen Teile des Gebäudes in ganz verschiedenen Epochen entstanden waren, und daß der jeweilige Bauherr rücksichtslos nur seinen eignen Geschmack hatte walten lassen, ohne zu versuchen, ihn in Harmonie mit dem Vorhandenen zu bringen. (p. 52)

A dilapidated pagan statue would also seem to testify to the current infertility of the Palis:

In der Mitte der ausgedehnten Gartenanlagen vor dem Schlosse stand eine Marmorstatue, die auch der Barockzeit entstammte: – die Blumengöttin Flora, die lächelnd den Reichtum ihres Füllhorns ausschüttet.

<sup>51</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Der königliche Trank* in *Brennende Liebe*, p. 79.

<sup>52</sup> Marie Madeleine, *Maria Fortunata* in *Der Liebe Regenbogen*, p. 46.

Aber sie war an einer Schulter verstümmelt, und die Garbe von Blumen und Früchten war abgeschlagen. Traurig und lächerlich sah das leere Füllhorn aus. (p. 53)

Marco's equally degenerate sister Antonia seems to have had inclinations to liven up the family blood. She wanted to marry a handsome farmer boy, but her mother forbade it and she has resented her ever since. At the time, however, Antonia made quite a scene: 'Donna Antonia hat sich damals angestellt wie verrückt, hat sich auf den Boden geworfen, sich die Haare gerauft – bis weithin hat man ihr Schreien gehört' (p. 49). Since then Donna Antonia has given herself up completely to religion, evoking Nietzsche's idea of Christianity as a haven for weak decadents: 'Jeden Morgen um fünf Uhr ist sie in der Kirche und jeden Abend auch. Sie fastet viel und kasteit sich, – öfters hat man sie auf den Fliesen des Gotteshauses ohnmächtig gefunden' (p. 49). And while Marco is not capable of remaining still, Antonia seems to suffer from a peculiar sort of bodily rigidity: 'Mit ihrem flachen Körper und ihrem einfarbig blassen, scharfumrissenen Gesicht sah sie aus wie eine sich automatisch bewegende Holzfigur. Eine starre Regelmäßigkeit war in jeder ihrer Bewegungen, – eine undurchdringliche Verslossenheit lag auf ihrem Antlitz' (p. 64). Both brother and sister seem to suffer from two sides of the same inbred, nervous ailment.

Marco himself is married to the very young Maria Fortunata, the daughter of a Milanese parvenu. As mentioned in third chapter, Maria's beauty attracts the attention of Arno Helmstadt, a German residing in nearby San Angelo, who romantically conceives of her as a half-Teutonic Lombard with her fair skin, blue eyes and dark hair. She represents the same northern Italian blood as the Pali family, only uncorrupted by inbreeding. Just as the aristocratic Palis are wilder and more sensual than their Teutonic counterparts, Maria is wilder and more sensual than any bourgeois German woman in Marie Madeleine's work. Though childish and timid in appearance, she makes her own attraction to Helmstadt clear from the start: 'Ihre tiefblauen Augen sahen ihn an mit dem Blicke eines Kindes, das ein Spielzeug ansieht, ein Spielzeug, das es hübsch findet.... Und das es begehrt.....' (p. 63). She later puts up no resistance to his advances: 'Die ängstlichen blauen Augen leuchteten freudig auf. Der schöne, rote Mund, auf den er seine Lippen legte, erwiderte willig den Druck' (p. 65). She also has no inhibitions in meeting Arno in secret and making love to him. In the story *Der königliche Trank*, where Maria also appears as Marco's young parvenu wife under the name of Angiolina, she finds an outlet for her sensual



inclinations in letting a servant, the aforementioned Marietta, tell her about her illicit meetings with her married lover.

In *Maria Fortunata*, when Don Marco finds out that Maria has been giving herself to Helmstadt, he rapes and kills her. In this typically melodramatic scene, we discover the nature of Marco's love for Marie and the racial hygienic reason why, up until now, he has never made love to her:

Du Bestie.... Ich habe dich immer geliebt. Als ich dich zum erstenmal sah, .... gleich .... gleich. Mit deiner weißen Haut und den schwarzen Haaren. Ich hab' nicht dein Geld gewollt. Nur dich!..... Ich hab' dein Geld nicht angerührt, – hab' mit meinen elenden Paar Groschen gewirtschaftet die ganze Zeit. – – – – – Ich hab' geschrien nach dir, gestöhnt nach dir. – – – Und hab' dich nicht berührt, weil mein Stamm verflucht ist, – mein Blut verflucht! – – – – – Die Mutter schreit im Wahnsinn, und ich muß meine Fäuste zusammenkrampfen, daß ich nicht so schreie wie sie. – Der Stamm muß sterben. Der Stamm ist verfault. Ich will der Letzte sein. Ich habe dich nicht berührt. Ich habe dein reines Blut nicht vergiftet. – – – – – Nur sehen wollte ich dich. Zu meiner Gattin mußte ich dich machen, damit kein anderer dich bekommt. (pp. 84-85)

Judging from this grotesque portrayal of Marco Pali, it seems that the Latin, inbred aristocrat suffers the worst of both worlds: the weakness and nervous disorders of the inbred and the hotbloodedness and brutality that comes from Latin admixture. He is the ultimate racial decadent in a body of work that often seems to do nothing but revel in racial decadence.



## **CONCLUSION: A WIDESPREAD PHENOMENON**

At the very least, the preceding chapters constitute the first, initiatory piece of academic writing on the work of Marie Madeleine. It is to be hoped that they also serve as a testimony to the usefulness of her work in understanding turn-of-the-century German culture, and, on a more general level, as evidence that popular fiction is just as much a window into cultural history as 'world literature'.

It is possible, however, to read, understand and benefit from this study without any interest in turn-of-the-century German literature whatsoever. For those concerned primarily with the idea of race, this dissertation has fulfilled an entirely different purpose. It is a documentation of the extent to which race played an essentially benign, aesthetic role in pre-fascist German literature and culture. In the preceding chapters I have merely put this phenomenon on exhibition, in hopes that scholars of other cultures and other artistic media might take note of similar phenomena in their own fields, and that psychologists and anthropologists, working with theories about how humans perceive racial and ethnic difference, might have some material upon which to base their ideas.

Of course, the implications of my findings are most immediate for other scholars of literature. We are now conscious of a whole roster of characters – the Slavic *femme fatale*, the mixed-race dandy, the inbred Teutonic aesthete, the earthy Latina – as well as a host of phenomena that can be found throughout turn-of-the-century German literature (both fiction and non-fiction) and beyond: racial beauty, racially determined personality, race as a catalyst for infatuation, the fascination of racial nuances, the pre-occupation with racial mixture vs. racial purity.

Ideally, the preceding study also serves an even broader purpose. Thinking contextually about art has become increasingly difficult, even daunting, in a world where the fundamentals of cultural history are increasingly absent from secondary and higher education and even disdained by academics in high positions. The academic enthusiasm for literature itself is waning and is being replaced by an enthusiasm for theory, for contemporary discourses about texts and time periods, rather than for the texts and time periods themselves. Rather than reaching for a history book, or even another work of art from the time period in question, students of literature are increasingly reaching for a book of the latest textual theory or post-colonial discourse to make their final conclusions about what they have been reading. This study has aspired to show the limits of such a methodology by demonstrating just how much we can still learn through cultural-historical research, and through posing basic questions which contemporary theory shuns.

Perhaps the fundamental question that this study has posed is, ‘Can the portrayal of racial differences, despite even the deepest racial prejudices present at any given time period, serve a purely benign, aesthetic purpose?’ And the answer, as I hope was evident early on, is yes. But the question to which the bulk of the study was devoted is, ‘how?’ And the answers, even within the limiting context of a single culture and a single time period, have turned out to be inexhaustible. If we had simply reached no further than the latest book of post-colonial discourse, we would not have got beyond the first question. In fact, we would not have been able to ask it. Now, having become fully conscious of the benign aestheticism of race, it is hard not to stumble upon it no matter where we look. It seems increasingly likely that Germany was not alone in experiencing an upsurge in race aestheticism at turn-of-the-century, and that since this period of time, there have been similar such upsurges in and outside of Germany. Thus, before we conclude – and to hint at the possibilities for future scholarship – it would be helpful to take a brief look at two passages from important books of different time periods and cultures not explored in this dissertation.

The aestheticisation of race is an element, for instance, of Giuseppe di Lampedusa’s *The Leopard* (1958), one of the seminal works of modern Italian literature. Early on, Lampedusa writes about the fateful racial mixture of the protagonist – a Sicilian prince whose ‘rosy hue and honey-coloured skin’ betray ‘the German origin of his mother [...] whose haughtiness had frozen the easy-going court of the Two Sicilies thirty years before’.<sup>1</sup> In the racial-psychological portrait that follows, we can observe what happens when a Teutonic-Latin mix grows up Italian rather than German:

But in his blood also fermented other German strains particularly disturbing to a Sicilian aristocrat in the year 1860, however attractive his fair skin and hair amid all that olive and black; an authoritarian temperament, a certain rigidity of morals, and a propensity for abstract ideas; these in the relaxing atmosphere of Palermo society, had changed respectively into capricious arrogance, recurring moral scruples and contempt for his own relatives and friends. (ibid.)

This racial portrait seems to forecast the protagonist’s fate as much as any such portrait we have observed in turn-of-the-century German literature – in short, it is hard to see much of a difference here in the aesthetic use of race at all.

In *Ich habe den englischen König bedient* (1971), one of the most widely-read works of modern Czech literature, Bohumil Hrabal parodies the German romanticisation of the Slav – on the eve of World War II no less. It plays a central role in the flirtation between the main character, a hapless young Czech, and the

Bohemian German girl who is infatuated with him. As she says: ‘die Deutschen aus dem Reich brauchten so nötig slawisches Blut, brauchten so nötig die Weite und die slawische Natur, schon seit tausend Jahren seien sie bemüht, sich im guten wie im bösen mit diesem Blut zu vermischen.’<sup>2</sup> She adds that ‘ein großer Teil des preußischen Adels slawisches Blut in sich habe, und dieses Blut macht diese Adligen in den Augen des übrigen Adels wertvoller als die anderen’ (p. 154). This is indeed intriguing, and if it is based on more than Hrabal’s own fantasy – if it is true that even in the thirties there was a sort of Nietzschean admiration for Slavic blood in Germany – then we may need to rethink the nature of race obsession in not only turn-of-the-century but also interbellum Germany.

Contemporary popular culture is also littered with vagaries regarding racial appearance and racial psychology, particularly the former, which may even be experiencing a new upsurge in our image-conscious times. For one thing, racial oddities, or what we feel are racial oddities, still fascinate us, as the controversial Benetton advertisements of the early 1990s demonstrate. One photo that was used depicts a yellow-haired, albino African girl at a tribal gathering, where she is being mustered by the other children with fascination and suspicion (fig. 64). Other photos depict a black woman suckling a white child (fig. 65), a white man kissing a black woman (fig. 66), a blond girl and a black girl hugging (fig. 67), not to mention quite a few other portraits of various racial types posing together, all to artistic effect (for instance, fig. 68).

The same penchant for racial oddities and contrasts may explain, at least in part, the immense appeal of Steve McCurry’s photo of Sharbat Gula, the Afghan girl with green eyes, which has become a Europe-wide emblem for National Geographic magazine (fig. 69). Her face and complexion seem distinctively Middle Eastern, so that her green eyes startle the Western viewer and lead to speculation about distant racial admixture. Similarly, the Italian author Alessandro Baricco’s recent novel *Silk* (1996), chronicles the fate of a nineteenth-century Frenchman, a silk trader, who develops a painful obsession with a young woman he encounters during his yearly visit to Japan, a warlord’s concubine who speaks only Japanese, but for whatever reason, doesn’t have Mongoloid eyes. Those who grew up in 1980s America cannot help but feel reminded of John Carpenter’s farcical film *Big Trouble in Little China* (1986) which takes place in San Francisco’s Chinatown, and revolves around the

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<sup>1</sup> Giuseppe di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*. London: Collins, 1961, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Bohumil Hrabal, *Ich habe den englischen König bedient*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998, pp. 153-4.

kidnapping of a Chinese woman with green eyes, praised by both her loving fiancé and the tyrannical Chinese kidnapper for its extreme rarity.

*Rassenschönheit* also continues to play a role in popular culture, even if it is no longer considered appropriate to catalogue all of its female manifestations in the name of science. Notions of racial beauty, comparable to those of turn-of-century Germany, seem in fact to play a marked role in the contemporary modelling industry. For instance, in an article from *The Observer* with the heading 'Genetic recipe for a race of supermodels',<sup>3</sup> Alex Bellos, a correspondent in Rio de Janeiro, informs British readers about the Brazilian region called Rio Grande do Sul, which has six percent of Brazil's population but has produced between forty to fifty percent of its top models. 'Rio Grande do Sul,' he writes, 'is populated largely by descendants of the German, Polish and Italian immigrants who arrived at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The races blended to form a physical type tailor-made for modelling'. This is not merely the correspondent's opinion, it is the opinion of top modelling agents. Dilson Stein, who discovered the Brazilian supermodel Gisele Bündchen, states: 'The mixture means you get these marvellous-looking women.' Another agent, Zeca de Abreu, meanwhile, feels that the Latin American climate they have grown up in makes them doubly piquant: 'They may look like they are from Germany or the Czech Republic [...] But they have been brought up in Brazil and that shows. Clients really sense this. They think Brazilians are happier and more sensual.'

Racial nuances, even the slightest, can help to lend appeal to actors and actresses as well, or they can be a means of self-promotion, as a recent interview with the British actress Rachel Weisz demonstrates. Weisz gives tantalising mention to her complexion, which looks rosy enough, but which she feels is racially foreign: 'I'm yellow-tinged,' she says, 'which is Hungarian.'<sup>4</sup> Her father, she goes on to say, 'has an Eastern European skin tone, not like British skin tone, which would be more pinky' (ibid.).

Though notions of a racially-based (as opposed to culturally-based) personality are perhaps less pronounced nowadays than they used to be, people still harbour them – as anecdotes from the introduction show – and snippets of the phenomenon still seep into journalism. For instance, in recommending a garage band not so much for their originality as for the show they put on, a correspondent for the *Edinburgh Evening News* recently wrote: 'And given that three of their members are Portuguese,

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<sup>3</sup> Alex Bellos, 'Tan, tall, lithe and lovely – girls from Brazil rule the catwalks', *The Observer*, 3 November 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Alastair McKay, 'Weisz guise', pp 6-9 in *The Scotsman Magazine*, 9 August 2003, p. 8.

it takes a mere two songs before they're virtually drowning in a bathtub of their own Latin adrenaline.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, one could say that the phenomenon of the eccentric mixed-race aesthete has been appropriated and modified by James Bond movies, whether in *Dr. No* (1962) – the title character of which is a half-German, half-Chinese psychopath – or in *License to Kill* (1989), in which the villain, Franz Sanchez, is an equally psychopathic Mexican-German. Possibly the greatest appeal of James Bond movies, however, is that they are sure to provide the audience every time not merely with several exotic locations, but also with several exotic racial beauties who, in the sixties, seventies and eighties, were likely to be the lady villains, each cruel in her own racial-typological way, but now, in these more politically correct times, are more likely to be the kind-hearted 'Bond-girls'.

In short, this dissertation is probably only the tip of the iceberg in regards to the essentially benign fascination that racial phenomena have always held. In years to come, if we are able to continue our recovery from centuries of imperialism and genocide, perhaps we will encounter further explorations of what racial differences truly mean to us.

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<sup>5</sup> David Pollack, 'The Parkinsons live it up on stage', *Edinburgh Evening News*, 26 September 2002.

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- 59) 'Sächsin mit slavischem (vermutlich tschechischem) Einschlag'. In Albert Friedenthal, *Das Weib im Leben der Völker*, vol. 2. Berlin: Verlagsanstalt für Litteratur und Kunst, 1911, between pp. 512-3.
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- 64) Benetton ad, albino African girl,  
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<http://www.nicholaspackwood.com/benetton.jpg>, last accessed: 7 April 2004.
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<http://www.edelmangallery.com/killer11.jpg>, last accessed: 7 April 2004.

# ILLUSTRATIONS



*Marie-Madeleine.*

Fig. 1



Phot. Reutlinger, Paris.

*Marie-Madeleine.*

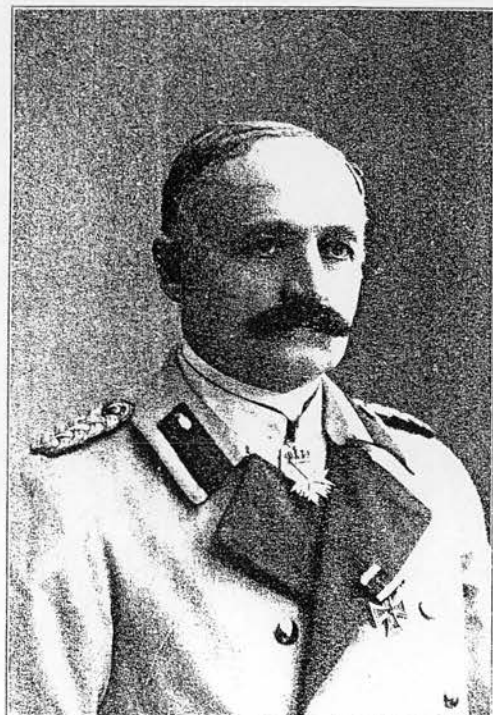
Fig. 2



MARIE-MADELEINE

phot. E. Schneider

Fig. 3



*Gen. A. H. Hammer*

Fig. 4



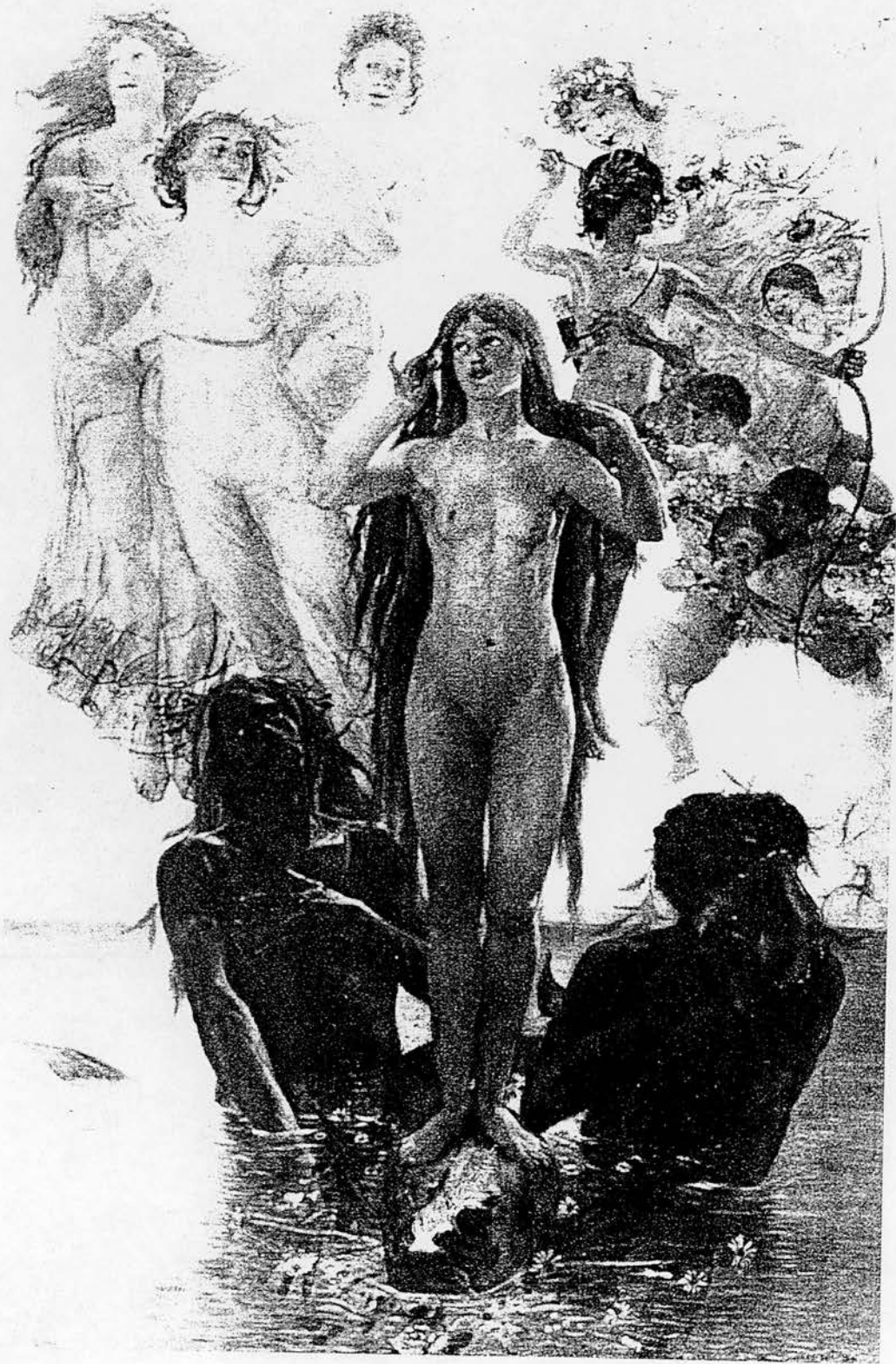


fig. 5





fig. 6



Fig. 22. Hottentottin.  
(Photographie des deutschen Kolonial-  
hauses, Berlin.)

fig. 7

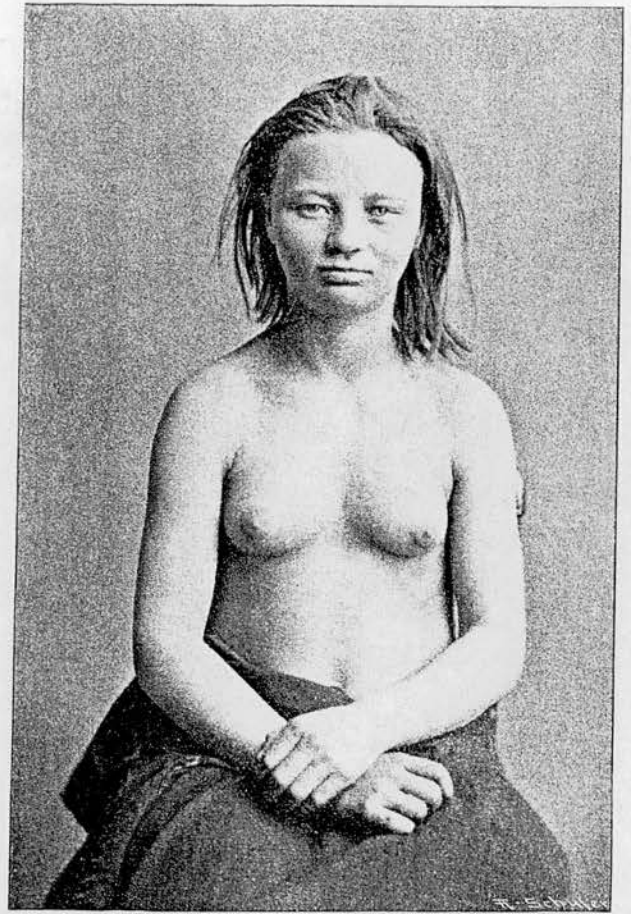


Fig. 130. Lappenmädchen mit entblösstem Oberkörper.  
(Phot. C. Günther.)

fig. 8



Fig. 21. Zwei Ainomädchen. (Japanische Photographie.)

fig. 10



Fig. 119. Drei Mädchen aus Samoa.  
(Phot. Andrew.)

fig. 9



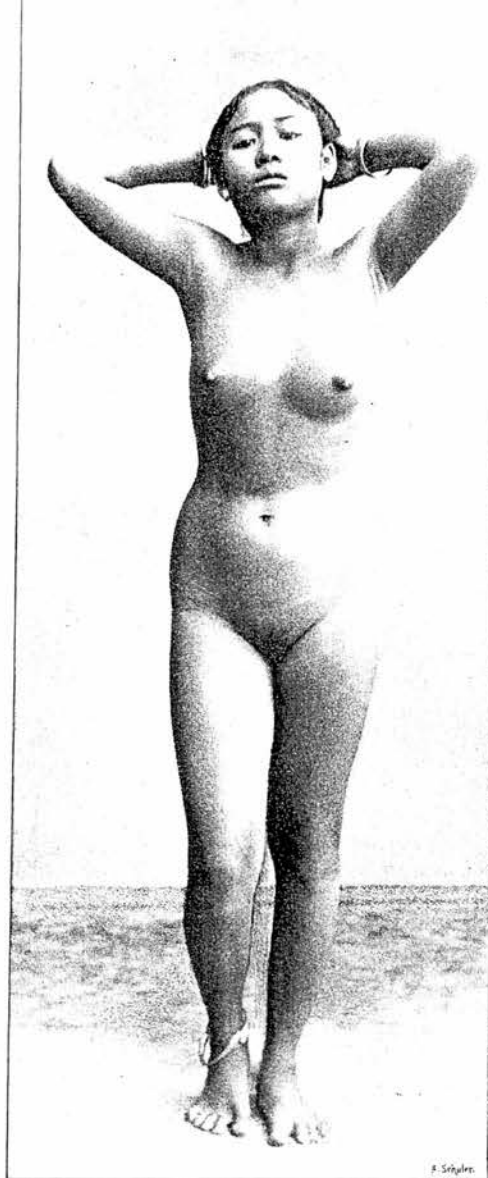


Fig. 103. Satidja. Javanin von 20 Jahren.  
Gemischter Typus.

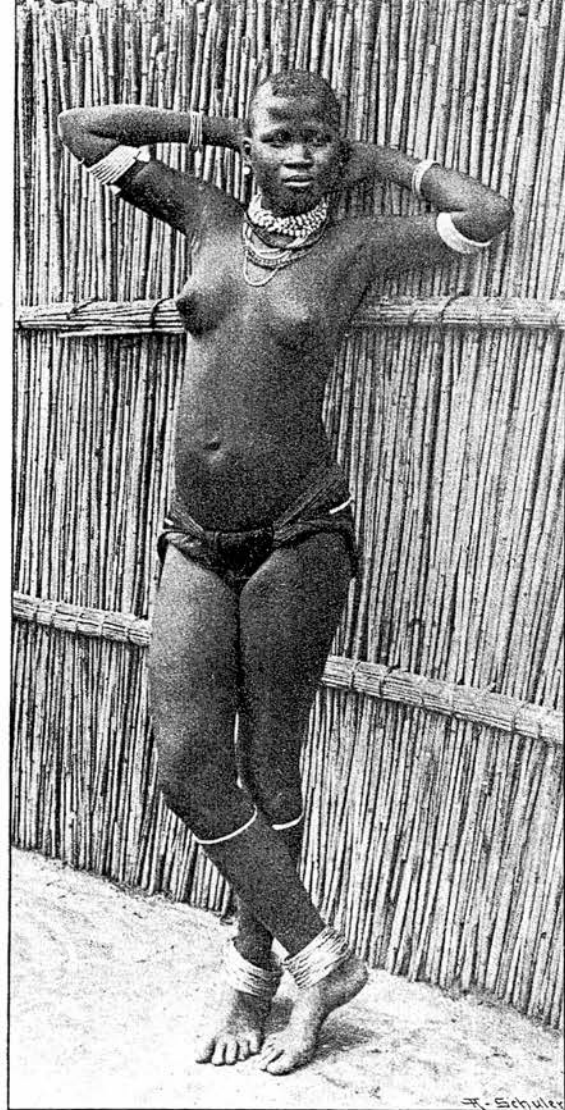


Fig. 59. Basutomädchen.

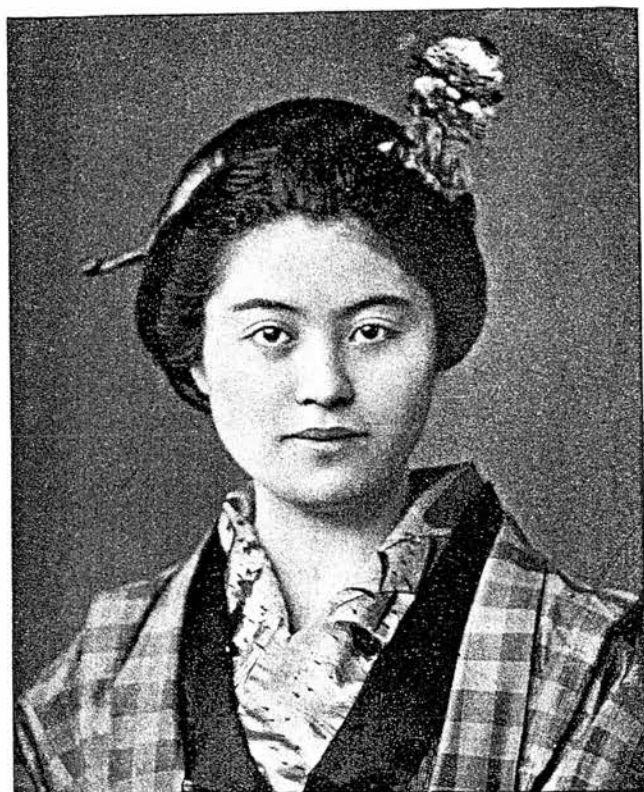


Fig. 41. Gesicht einer Japanerin mit wenig mongolischen Zügen.



Fig. 70. Kopf einer Bajadere aus Bombay.



Fig. 143. Fellahmädchen, nackt.

*fig. 15*



Fig. 164. Oberkörper eines 16jährigen Mädchens aus Rom.  
(Phot. von Plüschow.)

*fig. 16*

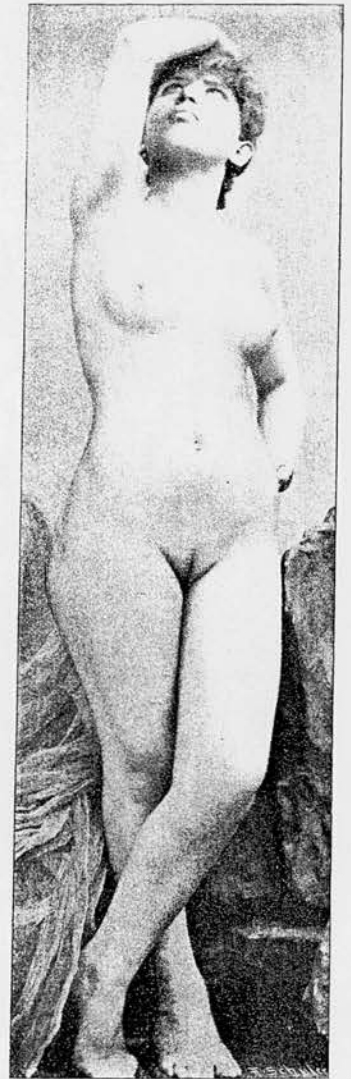


Fig. 176. Blonde Italienerin aus Mailand.

*fig. 17*

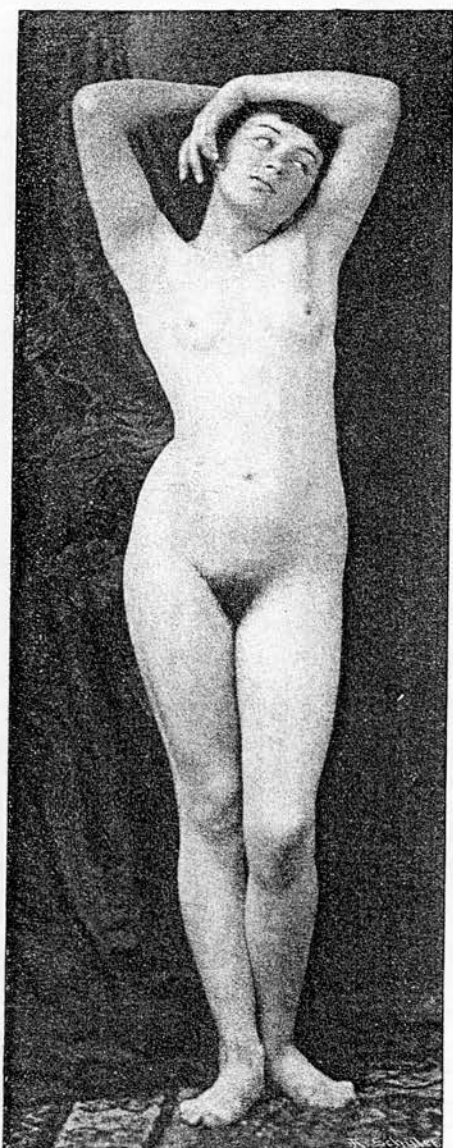


Fig. 218. 20jähriges Mädchen vom Rhein.

*fig. 18*

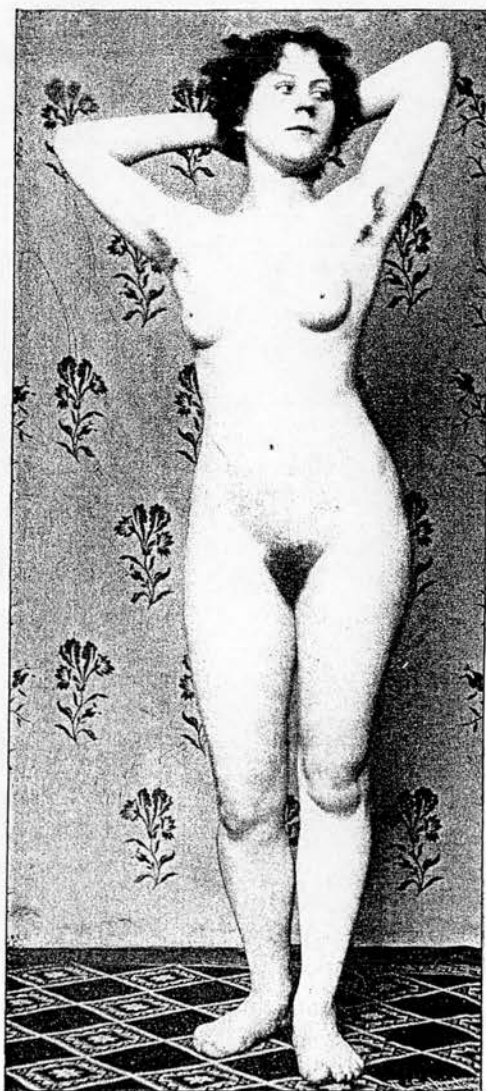
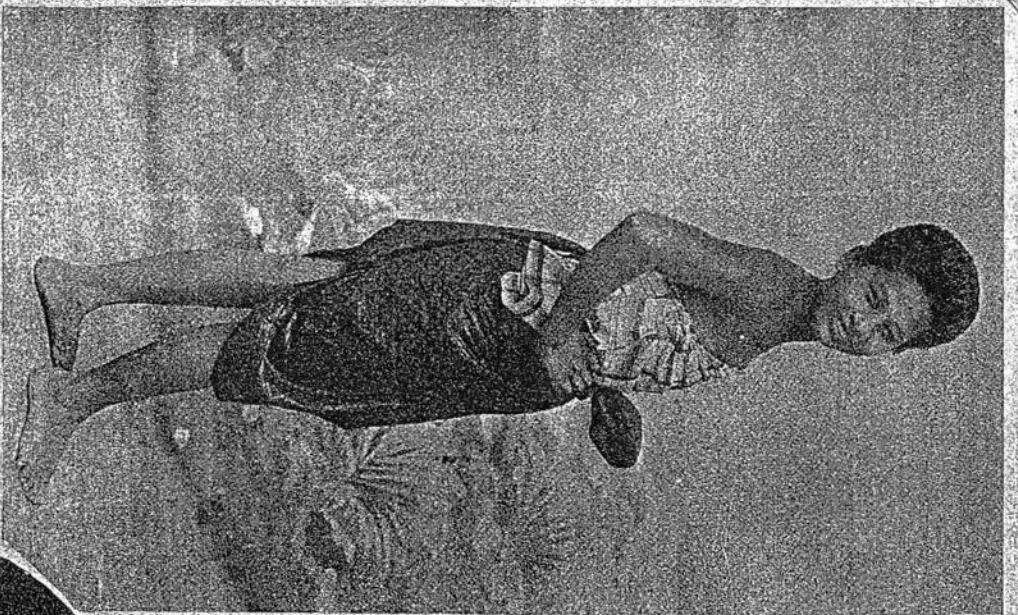


Fig. 223. Rothhaarige Dänin.  
(Phot. Dr. Kuhn-Faber.)

*fig. 19*





Siamesin.



Chinesin.

## Asiatische Schönheiten.

Sitz unter „Lieg. und Jure“.



Japanerin.



Koreanerin.

fig. 20



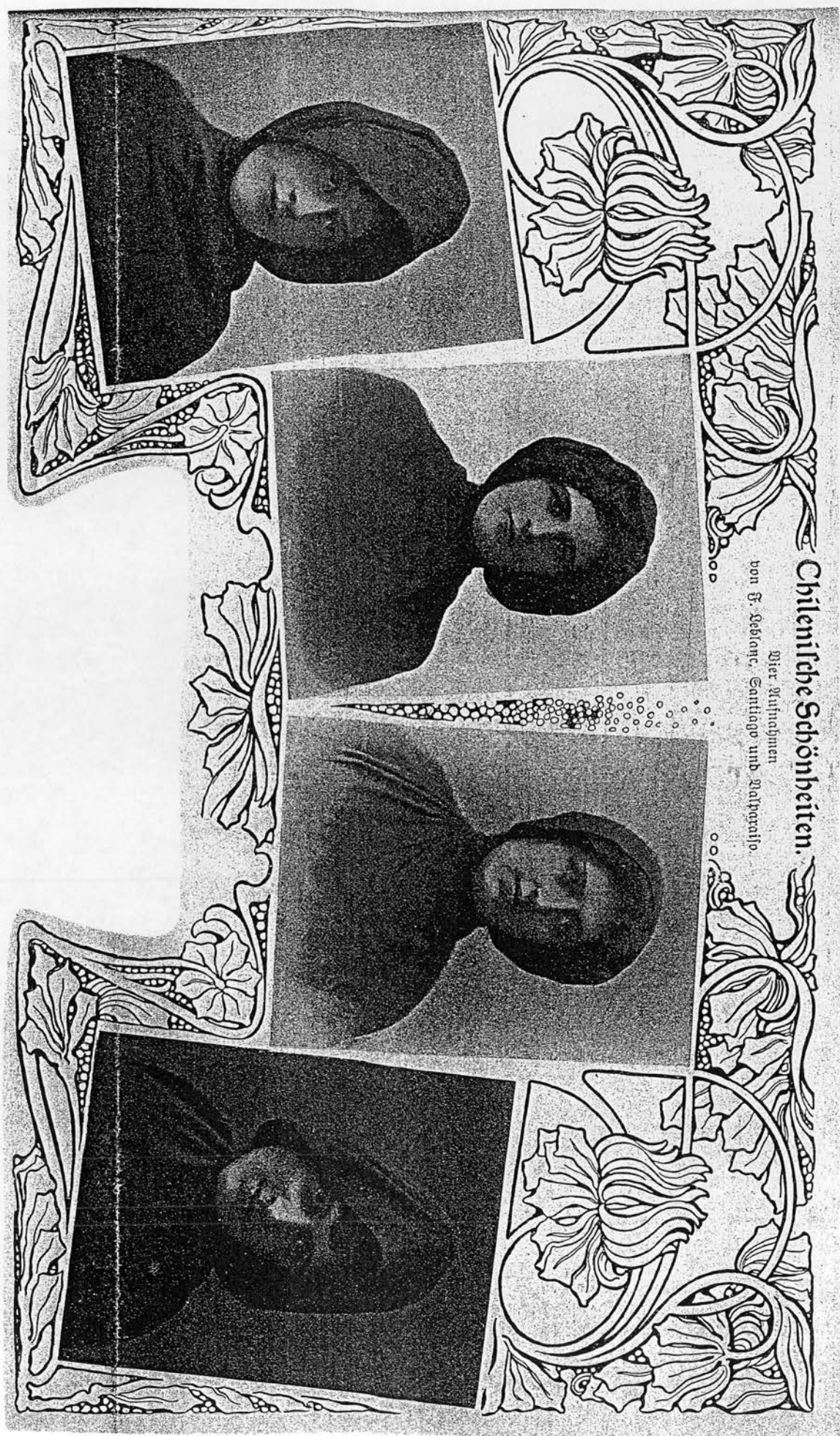


Fig. 21

# Chilenische Schönheiten.

Hierzu 3 photographische Aufnahmen von F. Leblanc, Santiago.

Die Schönheit der Frau ist bei allen Völkern ein Ergebnis der Rasse oder Rassenmischung, aber auch in Ergebnis der gesellschaftlichen Stellung des Weibes. Je mehr die Frau geachtet und in Ehren gehalten wird, desto vornehmer und reiner gestalten sich im Lauf der Generationen ihre Züge, desto stolzer, elastischer wird ihre Haltung. Die drei Porträtköpfe von Damen der Gesellschaft aus Santiago, Valdivia und der äquatorialen Stadt Iquique sind nun allerdings geeignet, dem Beschauer eine sehr hohe Meinung sowohl von der Rasse als auch von der sozialen Stellung der chilenischen Frauen beizubringen. Und in der That sind in wenigen Ländern der Erde alle günstigen Vorbedingungen für das Gedeihen edelster Frauenschönheit gegeben wie in Chile. Die überwältigende Mehrzahl der Chilenen sind Kreolen, hervorgegangen aus der Rassenmischung

der erobernden Spanier mit den araukanischen Indianerstämmen, die die kriegerischen, aber auch die form schönsten und als Nachkommen der peruanischen Inka die vornehmsten aller Indianer waren und, wo sie sich rein erhalten haben, in den Hochebenen zwischen den Anden und der Küste, noch sind. Zu dieser wundervollen Rassenmischung kommt, daß es in Chile entgegen den meisten Ländern der Erde mehr Männer als Frauen giebt: nach der letzten Volkszählung 1 263 784 Männer und nur 1 263 536 Frauen. Schon diese Thatsache allein und die von Spanien und Indianern überkommenen ritterlichen Anschauungen über das Verhältnis des Mannes zur Frau haben den Chileninnen eine gesellschaftliche Stellung gegeben, wie sie ohnegleichen ist. Kein Wunder, daß ihre Schönheit gedeiht!

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Vornehme Dame aus der Hauptstadt Santiago.



Eine Schönheit aus Valdivia.



Kreolische Schönheit aus Iquique.

Fig. 22



### Messina,

oder, wie sie beim Ballet genannt wird, die „braune Ratte“, oder, wie die Intendantin sie getauft hat, „Schmalfuß“, ist ein niedliches, braunes Mädchen von acht Jahren, welches kürzlich in die Berliner Opern-Ballet-Schule aufgenommen wurde. Sie vereinigt die tanzfalschen Gesichtszüge ihrer Mutter mit der Hautfarbe ihres afrikanischen Vaters. Von ihrer Lehrerin wird sie sehr gelobt. Auf Befragen, welche Stunde in der Schule ihr die liebste wäre, sagte sie: „Religionsstunde.“ — Aber wenn mich der liebe Gott weiß gemacht hätte, wie die Andern, dann hätte ich ihn noch viel, viel lieber.“ Dies ist der einzige Stummer ihres jungen Lebens. Unterdessen verdient sie bei jeder „Aschenbrödel“-Vorstellung 3 Mk. und ist mit Recht sehr stolz darauf. Jedenfalls dürfte sie die einzige „schwarze Ratte“ Deutschlands, wenn nicht Europas, sein.



Fig. 23



Eine weisse Negerin.  
(Siehe den Artikel unter „Dies und Jenes“.)

Fig. 24



Ein feiches Mädel. (Sel. Kostionowa.)

Fig. 25



Im altrussischen Kostüm. (Sel. J. P. Jeremiewa-Marfowa.)

Fig. 26

Fig. 27



Russische Salonlöwin. (Sel. Preobrajenskaja.)





Fig. 28



FRANZ  
STUCK

CP  
Photographie-Verlag von Franz Hanfstaengl in München.

Franz Stuck

Heavoterin.

Fig. 29





FRANZ  
STUCK  
99

Photographie-Verlag von Franz Hanfstaengl in München.

Franz Stuck. Japanerin.

Fig. 30

Fig. 32



Fig. 31



Fig. 33



Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36



Fig. 37





Fig. 38



Fig. 39



Fig. 40





Fig. 41



Fig. 42





Fig. 43



Fig. 44

Fig. 45





Fig. 46





Fig. 47

Fig. 48





Fig. 49

Fig. 50







Fig. 51



Fig. 52





Fig. 53



Fig. 54



Fig. 55



Fig. 56

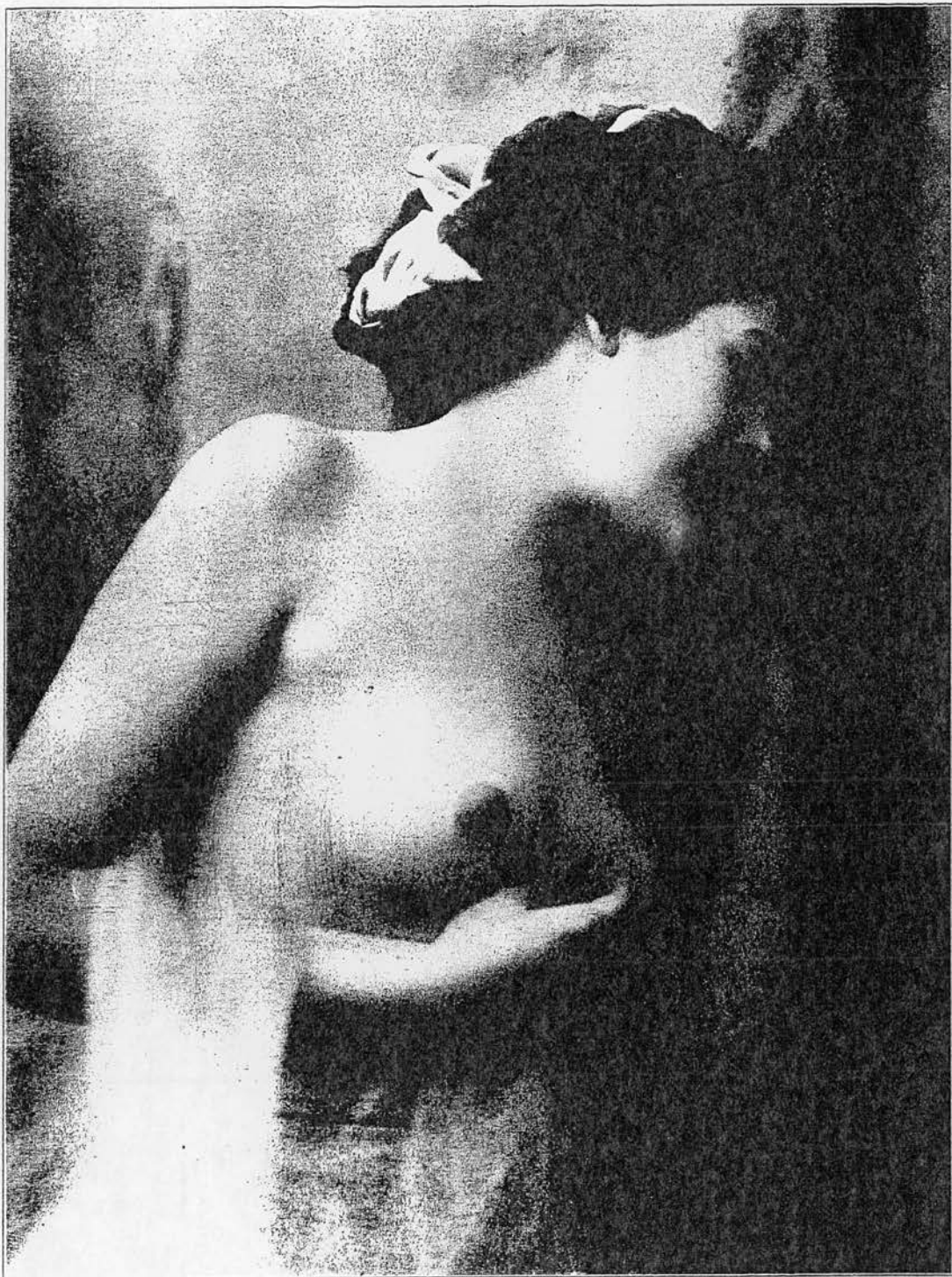




Fig. 57

Fig. 58





(Eust. Schneider, Berlin phot.)

Sächsin mit slavischem (vermutlich tschechischem) Einschlag.

Fig. 59





Abb. 795. Deutsche Frau,  
vermutlich von slawischer Beimischung.

Fig. 60

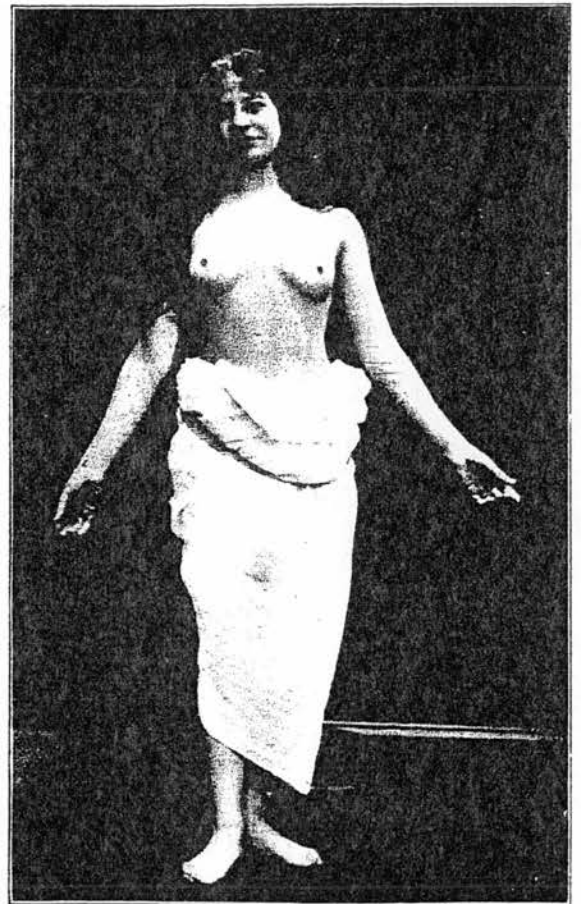


Abb. 799. Junge Berlinerin.  
(Slawische Mischung.)

Fig. 61



Abb. 818. Österreicherin.  
(Charakteristisch für die Mischung von germanischem mit südslawischem,  
vielleicht auch italienischem Blut.)

Fig. 62

## Das Euro-Miatische Menschengeschlecht.

Versuch einer graphischen Darstellung der Abstammungsverwandtschaft der Völker Europas und Asiens.

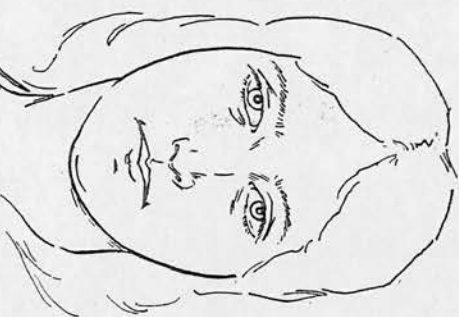


Fig. 1.  
Typus einer Germanin.

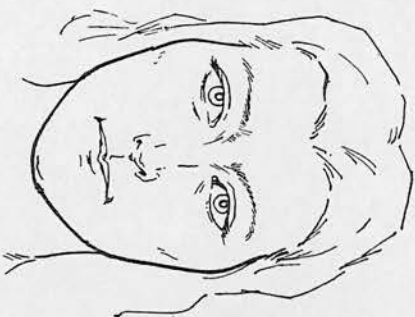


Fig. 2.  
Typus einer Norddeutschen  
von germanisch-slavischer  
Abstammung.

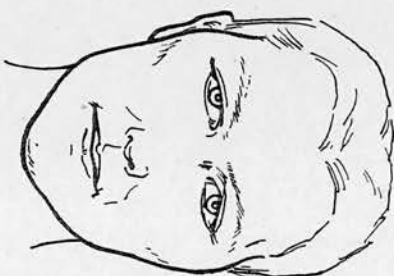


Fig. 3.  
Typus einer Slavinin.

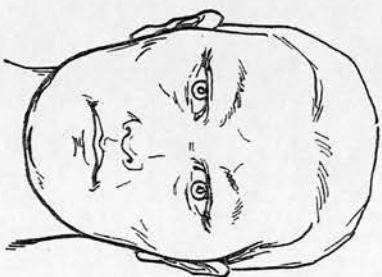


Fig. 4.  
Typus einer Central-  
asiatin.

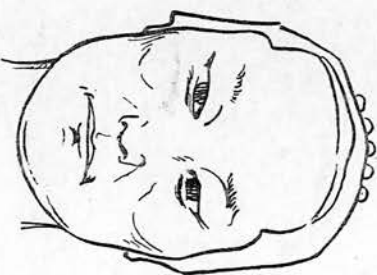


Fig. 5.  
Typus einer Mongolinin.

Die unmittelbar nebeneinander stehenden Figuren zeigen nur geringe Unterschiedenheiten, die in den fematistischen Kennzeichen - vergl. besonders die Nase und die Augen - zu suchen sind. Aus Fig. 1 entsteht durch allmähliche Übergänge Fig. 5 und umgekehrt. Noch vortrefflicher beachtet man die Übergänge von Fig. 3 zu 1, und 3 zu 5.



Fig. 64



Fig. 65



Fig. 66



Fig. 67



Fig. 68



Fig. 69